DN disabilitynow

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# Threat of "genetic underclass"

BY **ELIZABETH CHOPPIN**

Genetic testing could lead to the development of a new "genetic underclass" if the government does not introduce safeguards against discrimination, campaigners have warned.

A coalition of 45 organisations and individuals, including the British Council of Disabled People and the Disability Rights Commission (DRC), has called for new measures to ensure that employers and insurance companies cannot use genetic test results as a "vetting tool".

The coalition handed a statement expressing its concerns to a meeting of the all-party parliamentary disability group last month.

A new report* from GeneWatch UK, which is spearheading the campaign, reveals how an American woman fears that she and her daughter might be fired from their jobs or denied health insurance in the future because they share a gene which increases their risk of having breast cancer.

Another American tells how he has to hide his two genetic disorders, haemophilia and Huntington's disease, from his employers because he fears discrimination.

Dr Helen Wallace, deputy director of GeneWatch UK, said the coalition wanted to "nip the problem in the bud" before it spreads to the UK.

Dr Wallace urged the government advisory body, the Human Genetics Commission (HGC), to examine the situation overseas and come up with solutions on how to better protect people in the UK.

She said: "People should be able to make the difficult decision whether or not to take a genetic test on health grounds alone, without worrying about the financial implications.

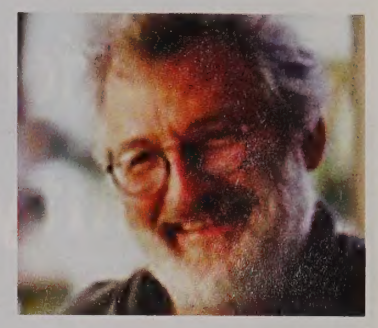
"(HGC) are sympathetic in principle, but unfortunately there hasn't been a lot of momentum to change anything."

**DNA fears: People are hiding their genetic disorders to avoid discrimination in the US and experts warn the UK may be next**

HGC vice-chair John Sulston *(pictured)* said the commission would report to the government on genetic discrimination and employment at the end of this year. But he warned against an "absolute" view that prospective employers should never use genetic screening because "rare exceptions" may apply, such as a person susceptible to sudden heart attacks becoming a pilot.

One concern is that the Disability Discrimination Act does not cover people who are not yet disabled but whose genetic tests show the possibility of future issues.

The DRC has just finished a consultation with various organisations and policy makers on widening the definition of disability to protect those with a diagnosis, but no symptoms, from unfair treatment.



A spokesman for the Association of British Insurers admitted genetic testing was "something we talk about" but denied reports that the group had applied for permission to use tests which show a predisposition to breast and ovarian cancer.

**Genetic discrimination by insurers and employers: still looming on the horizon, tel: 01298 871 898 or visit www.genewatch.org*

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# Labour betrays Welsh voters

Furious disabled campaigners in Wales say they have been "betrayed and deceived" after the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) broke a manifesto pledge to deliver free home care to disabled and older people.

In 2003, Labour Welsh Assembly candidates promised to deliver free home care to all disabled and older people, and all carers for people with mental health problems, in Wales.

But Brian Gibbons, the minister for health and social services, told the Welsh Assembly last month that WAG would not "fully deliver" on its manifesto pledge and instead would provide "more in terms of financial support for care recipients and carers".

The Coalition on Charging Cymru said it had spent years campaigning with the government to deliver free home care, and "felt very badly let down".

**Betrayed:** *(From left to right)* **Rhian Davies, Iwan Roberts from Help the Aged in Wales and Louise Perrett from Cardiff and Vale Coalition of Disabled People**

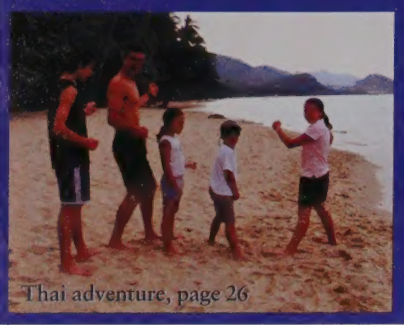
Rhian Davies *(pictured on the cover in front of the new Welsh Assembly building in Cardiff)*, chair of the coalition and chief executive of Disability Wales, said: "Now many will feel betrayed and deceived. The reality is that many thousands of disabled people who had hoped that they would finally be lifted out of poverty have had their hopes dashed."

Instead of free home care, Dr Gibbons increased the basic level of income above which people start paying for care by ten per cent. This will be 35 per cent above income support levels. Other plans include dedicating £3 million a year to support carers for people with mental health problems.

Dr Gibbons said the changes would help the same people as free home care would have and said he would continue to review home care charging policy.

• *Front cover photograph by Andrew Jeffery*

# Contents


Thai adventure, page 26


## News

Top stories 1-11
Sport 12
Health 13
News focus 14-19
*Including the government's green paper on welfare reform*

## Features

Comment 20-21
*Abuse in the Catholic Church, Danny Crates and Simone Aspis*
Profile 24
*Giles Long, Paralympic swimmer*
Holidays 26-29
*Thailand, cruises, UK breaks and financial assistance*
My life 31
*Andy Wright, co-founder, Accessible Travel & Leisure*
Ombudsman guide 37
*Making complaints about your local council*

## Regulars

Letters, web watch, backchat 22-23
Arts 32
Books 33
Motoring 34
Easykit 35
Share your problems 38-39
Information 41 & 43
Classified 44-50
Up for grabs 51



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# Running champ will be missed

Disabled sporting organisations have paid tribute to Paralympic athlete Paul Pearce, who died last month after being struck by a lorry during training.

The 43-year-old visually impaired athlete from Letchworth, Hertfordshire, was training on the A507 near Stotfold, Bedfordshire, when he was hit by a lorry. He died at the scene.

The father of two represented Great Britain at the Paralympic games in Athens in 2004, coming sixth in the T13 marathon – Britain's highest placed marathon runner. He also came fifth in the T12 10,000m race at the European Championships in Finland in August 2005.

The British Paralympic Association said: "He was a dedicated athlete as well as a tremendous personality, who was totally self-effacing. We enjoyed his participation as part of our team in Athens and will always remember him fondly."

Action for Blind People, which runs sport sessions for young blind and partially sighted children, said the accident should not deter such youngsters from fulfilling their sporting potential.

# UN calls for inclusive education at all levels

BY **ELIZABETH CHOPPIN**

Education campaigners have declared that "inclusionists have won the day" following the latest changes to the United Nations (UN) draft convention on disability.

The convention, which aims to improve the rights of disabled people in the UN's 191 member states, calls for "an inclusive education system at all levels" and has removed a clause allowing the choice of segregated special schools.

Andy Lusk, director for education and early years for the disability charity Scope, said the amendment was a step in the right direction.

Mr Lusk said: "If we are serious about equality, it is inconceivable that disabled children should be in a segregated setting." But he added there had to be a gradual change towards inclusion.

Mark Vaughan, founder of the Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education, said UK education policy would need to change towards a "more inclusive pattern than the one now" once the convention was ratified, although this change would be "very slow".

But Clare Dorer, chief executive of the National Association of Independent Schools and Non-Maintained Special Schools, said: "We would be anxious if inclusive education was taken to mean rigidly mainstream environments. We fully support the right to choose."

A spokesman for the Department for Education and Skills said no changes in government policy would be necessary if the convention was ratified.

The international charity Save the Children also welcomed changes to the convention that mean it now includes a call for disabled children to be registered at birth, to have access to the justice system and to be consulted on policies affecting them *(DN, February)*.

The convention should be ratified at the UN General Assembly next year.

# Iraq veterans mental health concerns

More than 1,300 members of the armed services have been diagnosed with mental health problems after serving in the war in Iraq, according to new government figures.

Don Touhig, minister for veterans, revealed the new figures last month in response to a parliamentary question from Conservative MP Mark Harper.

It showed 1,333 servicemen and women who served in Iraq between January 2003 and September 2005 had been assessed as having a mental health condition - 1.5 per cent of the total service personnel who served during that period. Of those, 182 were found to have post-traumatic stress disorder.

But the Ministry of Defence (MOD) denied a report in *The Independent* newspaper that it was failing to provide treatment for many veterans.

A spokeswoman said the MOD took the health and welfare of its personnel "very seriously" and had a "comprehensive policy for the treatment of serving regulars and reservists with mental health problems".

But she said the MOD was not responsible for the healthcare of personnel who left the services.

Combat Stress, the Ex-Services Mental Welfare Society, said it was helping 60 veterans who had been discharged from the armed forces.

# Care workers to register

About 750,000 care workers will be registered for the first time, as part of a bid to professionalise the social care workforce.

Domiciliary and care home staff for both adults and children will have to join the Social Care Register run by the General Social Care Council (GSCC).

But groups such as day services staff and those working for disabled people on direct payments will not yet be included. The GSCC will start a consultation shortly.

It has been compulsory for all social workers to be registered since April 2005.

Deborah Kitson, director of the Ann Craft Trust, said registration would reduce opportunities for staff to abuse vulnerable people, including those with learning difficulties."

She added: "This registration must be in conjunction with increased training on identifying and preventing abuse."

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# Asda fines for parking abuse

DN CAMPAIGN BAYWATCH

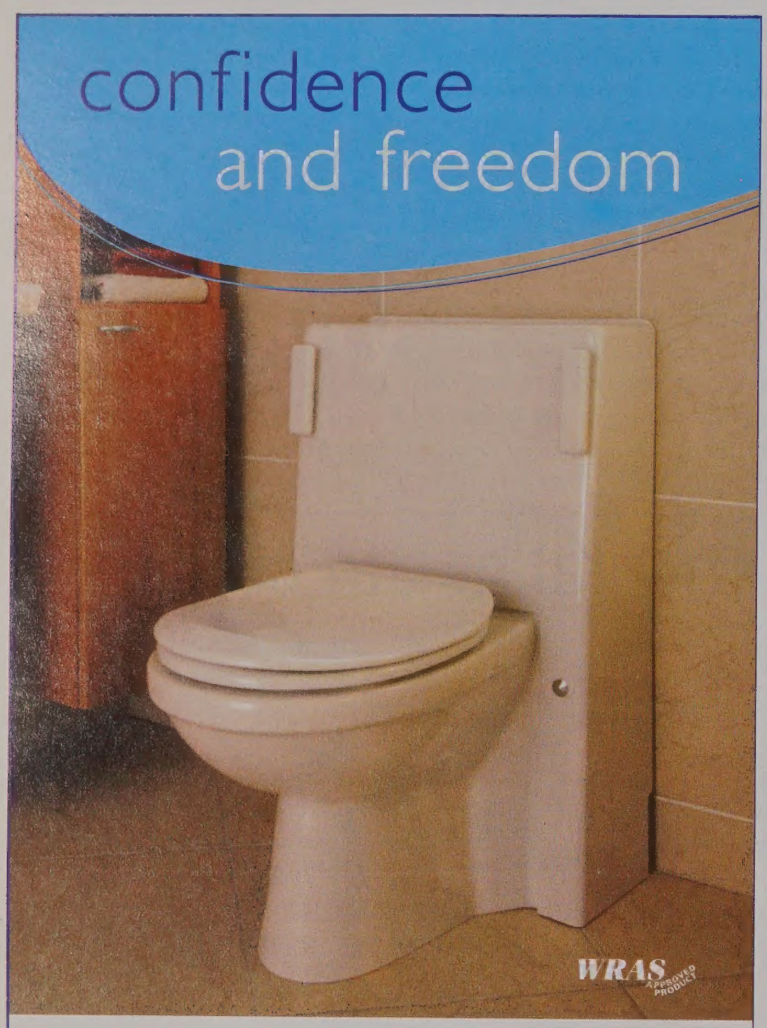
Blue badge holders in one area of Leeds should find it easier to park at their local Asda store, after the supermarket introduced on the spot fines for people who abuse disabled bays.

The supermarket has teamed up with Leeds City Council to tackle the misuse of bays at its Pudsey store.

Parking attendants will issue £60 fines to cars parked in bays without a valid blue badge.

An Asda spokeswoman said: "It really did get to the stage where we needed to do something different. We think it's making quite a big difference."

She said managers would introduce the scheme in more stores if necessary.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# Government refuses to explain lack of funding

DN CAMPAIGN

BY JOHN PRING

The government has refused to explain why it will not fund research to uncover the true scale of the abuse of people with learning difficulties.

Campaigners called for funding after the Department of Health announced it was contributing £250,000 to a £600,000 Comic Relief project to examine the extent of abuse of older people.

Kathryn Stone, director of Voice UK, which supports victims of crime who have learning difficulties, welcomed the project and said she was confident it would "highlight the abuse of older people with learning disabilities". But she said she was "disappointed" at the focus on older people.

She said: "Voice UK has been calling for research into the abuse of people with learning difficulties for many years. Although we suspect that the level of such abuse is high, we will not know the true extent of it until funding is given to research it fully."

She said such research would "highlight limitations in current practice and identify what can be done to stop the abuse".

Jean Collins, director of learning difficulties charity Values Into Action (VIA), said: "We know there is a lot of abuse going on and people with learning difficulties deserve the same amount of support and protection as older people do."

She said the scale of abuse unearthed by VIA during work on the Human Rights Act two years ago was "extremely worrying".

A Department of Health spokesman was unable to explain why the government would not fund the research.

# Call for boost in family support

Gordon Brown's ex-right hand man has called on the government to boost support for families with disabled children.

Ed Balls, Labour MP for Normanton and a former chief economic adviser to the Treasury, is to introduce a ten-minute rule bill in the Commons calling on councils to provide better services for disabled children and their families.

His Disabled Children's Assessment and Services bill calls for short breaks, respite care and more effective assessments.

It also calls on the Treasury to include a Public Service Agreement (PSA) for disabled children in next year's Comprehensive Spending Review for 2008-2012. The PSA would force local authorities to provide certain services.

The bill will not become law but will provide the opportunity to raise the issue in front of MPs.

A spokesman for disability charities that are supporting the bill, including Mencap, Contact A Family, the Disabled Children's Council and the Special Education Consortium, said: "The government has come out with some good policies around disabled children, but the problem is that they aren't being translated into action on the ground. A public service agreement would mean that in order to get full funding, (local authorities) would have to provide better services."

A Treasury spokesman said a "rough outline" of the Spending Review would be released midway through 2006.

**Out and about: Ravender Kalsi and Paul Sanders test the service at Mulberry Tea Rooms, as part of a new council project* to review how accessible shops and other public services treat people with learning difficulties in Greenwich. Venues are rated according to such things as lighting and staff attitude.**
**www.greenwichfinders.org.uk*

# Study into separate blue badge schemes

Disabled drivers frustrated by the number of different parking schemes in central London are being asked to take part in a new study.

The research, commissioned by the Department for Transport, will focus on the four boroughs currently exempt from the national blue badge disabled parking scheme.

It fulfils a government promise to launch a consultation on the exemption in its response to the review of the blue badge scheme in 2002.

The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, the City of Westminster, the City of London and part of Camden all operate their own parking schemes for disabled people.

In the past, *DN* readers have complained about these separate schemes, which have caused confusion and led to parking fines *(DN, March 2005)*.

The project is considering several options, including applying the national scheme to the four boroughs or giving central London its own scheme.

Researchers will hold a series of workshops in April*.

** To take part, tel: 0800 0854 414 or email: office@sraltd.co.uk*

# Watchdog to quiz whistleblower

England's care watchdog is to talk to a whistleblower who claims people with learning difficulties were abused in a long-stay hospital.

*DN* first reported allegations of "shocking conditions" on a ward at Fieldhead Hospital in Wakefield two years ago.

Anne Holmes*, a former volunteer on the ward, made repeated attempts to convince the hospital to raise standards. She claimed patients were left to sit for hours in their own faeces, dressed in torn clothes, and rarely kept occupied.

*DN* later raised serious questions about the way the Healthcare Commission (HC) handled the allegations at Fieldhead, which has since closed. Now the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) has agreed to discuss the allegations with Miss Holmes.

A CSCI spokesman said: "We will be approaching the whistleblower to talk to her about what happened at Fieldhead and to see if anything she has to say has any implications for the current standards of care in settings we regulate which involve those former patients."

Miss Holmes told us: "Let us hope this means that someone will finally be taking it upon themselves to expose this institutional neglect after all this time."

The former patients now live independently in supported accommodation.

The CSCI spokesman said: "We will also talk to the former patients as part of our regular inspection work and if they raise any concerns then we will pursue them."

Linda Christon, CSCI regional director for Yorkshire and Humber, said CSCI would also discuss the case with Wakefield Council and the HC.

**Not her real name*

# Sainsbury's sells out-of-date bread

BY **ELIZABETH CHOPPIN**

A Sainsbury's employee selected an out-of-date loaf of bread for a blind man she was helping do his shopping.

Paul Brooks called ahead so a staff member could help him pick out items from a list, but came home with a loaf of bread that expired 24 hours before.

His wife Kate, from Redditch, said the bread smelled "not fresh" and they did not feel comfortable eating it.

She said: "If I'd been poorly or in hospital, he would have eaten it. If it had been meat, he could have become quite sick."

When Mrs Brooks called Sainsbury's to complain, she was told the store only helped her husband as a favour.

**Let down: Paul and Kate Brooks with the inedible bread**

It was only after she sent an official complaint to Sainsbury's, backed by a letter from RNIB, that she received an apology and a promise to arrange disability training for staff.

A Sainsbury's spokeswoman said: "Whatever the type of the bread which Paul asked for, he was given the latest date available in the store on that day."

An RNIB spokesman said: "We are pleased to hear that Sainsbury's have apologised to Mr and Mrs Brooks and that they now appear to have taken the matter seriously."

# Employers need an attitude adjustment

More needs to be done to tackle employers' attitudes towards recruiting disabled people if proposed reforms to the Incapacity Benefit (IB) system are to succeed, according to the Disability Rights Commission (DRC).

The comments from Bert Massie, DRC chairman, came last month as he gave evidence to a parliamentary inquiry into IB and the government's Pathways to Work programme.

It followed the publication of the long-awaited green paper on welfare reform*, in late January, which aims to overhaul the current IB system and roll out the Pathways programme nationally.

Bert Massie told the work and pensions committee that the green paper concentrated too heavily on the measures required to get disabled people back into work, without adequately addressing the responsibilities of employers to help bring that process about.

Marilyn Howard, DRC policy manager, told the committee the government had not done enough to help people with mental health conditions and learning difficulties find work

The inquiry continues, with further evidence sessions throughout the spring.

**See News Focus, pages 16-17*

## Scotland cracks down on safety

New government proposals should improve the protection of vulnerable adults and children in Scotland.

The Scottish Executive aims to make it harder for unsuitable people to find work in social care and education.

The measures include introducing a list of those unsuitable to work with vulnerable adults, to run alongside an extended list of people banned from working with children.

The process of vetting potential staff will also be centralised and streamlined.

Disabled people planning to employ a care worker will be able to check whether they are on a list of those barred from working with vulnerable adults. And parents will be able to check if a private tutor is on the barred list. The proposals have been put out for consultation* until 2 May.

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# Banks fail on chip and PIN

BY ELIZABETH CHOPPIN

New security regulations covering the use of debit and credit cards could cause severe problems for disabled people paying for goods and services, campaigners have warned.

From last month, customers with the standard chip and PIN card – where users have to enter their personal PIN number into a keypad – can no longer sign for purchases and may have their card refused if they cannot remember the PIN number or punch it into the keypad.

But the National Consumer Council (NCC) warned that some disabled people might not know there is a chip and signature card alternative, which allows users to sign their name instead of punch in a PIN.

Claire Whyley, deputy director of policy at the NCC, said: "A year ago we urged the banks to launch an information campaign and improve bank staff awareness of the chip and PIN alternatives. We are really disappointed that banks have not taken their responsibilities to vulnerable customers more seriously."

Emma Reeves, who runs a disability website*, said disabled people who cannot use chip and PIN all the time, such as in petrol forecourts that do not have mobile chip and PIN terminals, would also need the alternative chip and signature card – forcing them to carry two cards.

A chip and PIN spokesman said they had done their best to publicise the alternatives.

He said that concerned disabled people should speak to their banks about the card option best suited to their needs.

** www.poss-ability.com*

Before and after: Vandals have pulled up plants and stolen a climbing frame from the garden of a school for disabled children in Enfield.

Rae Windebank, head teacher at Suffolk's Speech and Language Resource Base, said the children were very distressed at the damage and the incident was a huge setback for their learning.

"A lot of hard work had gone into getting the garden right for the children, and it had taken almost five years of planning and fundraising to get it set up," she said.

An Enfield council spokeswoman said they suspected local children were responsible.

The school needs to raise about £500 to buy new plants and equipment*.

"Right now, the children are just running around in the empty space," she said.

** Contact Chris Butler, tel: 020 8804 1534, email: butler.suffolks.enfield@lgfl.net*

# Help for families delayed by review

The government should be doing more for families in the earliest years of bringing up a disabled child, say campaigners.

Plans for a National Centre for Early Intervention, which would provide advice, research and training to parents and professionals, have been delayed until at least 2008.

The final decision will depend on the government's spending in 2007 according to the Department for Education and Skills.

The learning difficulties charity Mencap, which was commissioned to carry out a study into the feasibility of a centre last year, said there was a "clear-cut need for a 'one-stop shop'" to help deal with fragmented services and support for families and carers of the UK's 250,000 disabled children under the age of five.

Jo Williams, Mencap's chief executive, said: "The centre is estimated to cost between £5.2 million and £5.8 million over five years. This works out at about £20 per child. Surely the government would agree that spending £20 on the development of a disabled child would be money well spent."


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## In brief

### Antidepressant risk

Potentially harmful antidepressants are still being given to children despite guidance from the Committee for Safety on Medicines, the government has admitted.

A parliamentary question tabled by Liberal Democrat Paul Burstow, MP for Sutton and Cheam, found more than 85,000 prescriptions - or one in three of all antidepressant prescriptions given to children - were for drugs that the regulatory body has said can increase the risk of suicide for people under the age of 18.

### Sprinter's lost leg

Paraplegic athlete John McFall launched a recent radio appeal after his car containing his prosthetic leg was stolen days before a race in Germany.

Otto Bock – which supplies his prosthesis – had provided a spare leg, in case the original was not found.

The leg was returned just before the event, after two youths tried, but failed, to get money from him for it.

This meant Mr McFall could go on to achieve his personal best of 8.55 seconds in a 60-metre sprint.

### Rowling in Romania

JK Rowling, author of the Harry Potter series, visited Romania last month to help launch the Children's High Level Group, a charity aimed at improving children's rights.

Since 2004, Ms Rowling has campaigned to stop the use of "cage beds" in children's psychiatric institutions in Romania and the Czech Republic.

She said: "The social problems that lead to the placing of children in institutions are complex and will not be resolved quickly; however, that is a good reason for making a start as soon as possible."

### Carers' debts mount

More than a fifth of carers found coping financially while caring for a sick or disabled relative was "a constant struggle", an ITV News survey found.

The survey, run in conjunction with charity Carers UK, found nearly a third of 1,000 carers questioned had fallen into debt.

ITV News has launched a campaign for the government to appoint a "Carers' Czar" to champion the rights of carers.

**Taking care of business: Maureen Lipman and Mick Ford, original cast members of 1979 cabbie film The Knowledge, join disabled actor and writer Mat Fraser *(centre)* to honour Radio Taxis, the London firm which has snagged one of Scope's Access Equality gold awards. The platinum, gold and foundation awards inform disabled people about good accessibility in businesses.**

# Capacity law is "fundamental step"

Disabled people are being asked what they think about important new powers that will soon become law under the Government's Mental Capacity Act*.

From 2007, the act will introduce a Lasting Power of Attorney, a legal document that a disabled person can use to choose someone to make future decisions on their behalf.

The "attorney" will be able to act for the disabled person if they lose the capacity to make decisions for themselves, for example on stopping treatment.

Richard Kramer, director of policy at the social care charity Turning Point and co-chair of the Making Decisions Alliance, said: "This legislation provides a fundamental step forward in allowing people choice and control over what happens to them in the event that they cannot make decisions for themselves."

**To take part in the consultation, which ends on 14 April, visit www.dca.gov.uk/publications.htm or contact the Department for Constitutional Affairs, tel: 020 7210 8614*

# Inquiry call into abuse by priests

BY **JOHN PRING**

The Catholic Church should hold inquiries into the cases of priests who have sexually abused disabled children, according to a leading expert.

Margaret Kennedy *(pictured)*, chair and founder of Minister and Clergy Sexual Abuse Survivors, says there are still vital lessons for the Church to learn, despite its progress on child protection over the last five years.

Writing in *DN**, she says the Church often moved priests between parishes and countries to cover up such abuse.

She said: "I think the Catholic Church are working hard on this but I have always said you need to learn lessons and that is the bit they are not willing to do."

Although child abuse by priests has been widely reported, she says cases in which disabled children have been targeted have been ignored.

One worrying case involved Father Neil Gallanagh, who received a six-month suspended sentence last year for indecently assaulting two pupils of St John's Catholic School for the Deaf in Boston Spa, Yorkshire, more than 20 years ago. Another 12 charges were left on file.

But Ms Kennedy, a consultant on disability and abuse, has been told a nun knew about the abuse years before it was finally investigated by police. She says vital questions can only be answered by an inquiry.

Eileen Shearer, director of the Catholic Office for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults, said Ms Kennedy was "accurately describing the way things used to be in the Church but not the way they are now".

She said there was no need for inquiries because the Church was implementing Lord Nolan's review of its child protection policies. There are now child protection commissions in every Catholic diocese in England and Wales.

She said: "There is a shocking history of negligence but I think the bishops have got the message."

**See Comment, page 21*

# Independence and carers top Conservative agenda

The Conservatives have launched a seven-point "Disability Agenda", a further sign that David Cameron wants to place disability at the heart of his party's policy debates *(DN, February)*.

The agenda says a Conservative government would promote independence by giving disabled people more control over their services, provide greater support for carers and improve their rights to respite care.

It also calls for reforms to make the benefits system more accessible, flexible, fairer and simpler, avoiding means-testing where possible and removing disincentives to work.

And it says there should be equal access to healthcare for disabled people and more recognition of the stigma faced by people with mental health problems seeking work.

More controversially, the agenda calls for a halt to the closure of special schools until the Special Educational Needs system has been reformed.

Mr Cameron has launched six groups as part of a wide-ranging policy review, looking at social justice, the economy, quality of life, public services, security, and globalisation and global poverty.

Jeremy Hunt, shadow minister for disabled people, said he would liaise with the shadow cabinet to ensure that "we stop seeing disability as a distinct and separate issue, and instead see the disability agenda as an integral part of policy thinking".

A party spokesman said Mr Cameron had told each policy group that disability should be central to what they do. Mr Hunt will feed the views of disabled people into each group.

The spokesman said: "David has made it very clear that disabled policies have got to be central to the policy review process and I do not think that that has been the case for any political party before."

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Credible kitchen: Adam Thomas *(far right)* has become the first winner of an award for accessible kitchen design. Mr Thomas, who is disabled, has been designing kitchens for Buckinghamshire-based Design Matters for 26 years. He won the award at the KBB Review Industry Awards, for a kitchen *(above)* he designed for a wheelchair user with multiple sclerosis.

# Care campaigners' fury at charity name change

BY **ELIZABETH CHOPPIN**

Britain's leading pro-euthanasia campaign group has changed its name to Dignity in Dying, causing fury among palliative care organisations.

Dignity in Dying - your life; your choice, previously the Voluntary Euthanasia Society (VES), said the name change was voted in by 4,000 members and "reflects what they're saying about their deaths".

But in a letter of protest to the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), the Association of Palliative Medicine (APM) and the Medical Ethics Alliance (MEA) said: "Patients often ask whether they will have dignity in dying because they are frightened, feel abandoned, or are worried they might be left incontinent, confused or in another state that will undermine their personal dignity. These patients are not asking for euthanasia or assisted suicide; they are asking for good care."

Dr Anthony Cole, chair of the Medical Ethics Alliance, told *DN*: "This is taking over an ordinary expression used in the hospice movement and subverting it to another political cause. We cannot see that it is possible for the philosophy of palliative care to coexist with the philosophy of killing the sick – which lies at the heart of assisted suicide and euthanasia."

A Dignity in Dying spokesman said: "We have always supported palliative care, and we think the two things are compatible."

He added: "They're uneasy because they realise it's a good name. Their outlook is mistaken - the two work well together."

A spokeswoman for the Patent Office, an agency of the DTI, said trademark disputes like this could lead to a "negotiation process" or a hearing.

Meanwhile, a new anti-euthanasia lobby, the Care Not Killing Alliance, has been launched. It includes APM, the British Council of Disabled People and the National Centre for Independent Living.

# Diabetes victories

A woman sacked by a cake factory after a manager found out she had diabetes was a victim of "pure prejudice", according to the Disability Rights Commission (DRC).

Elizabeth Morrison won more than £5,000 in compensation from Emma's Country Cakes in Gloucestershire.

The firm's decision to settle the case came days after a Dorset prep school admitted discriminating against a pupil with diabetes.

Mrs Morrison, whose case was supported by the DRC, started work last July but was sacked nine days later.

Agnes Fletcher, the DRC's assistant director of communications, said: "Mrs Morrison's manager had wrongly assumed she would have frequent blackouts. But her employers only needed to ensure that Elizabeth had regular rest breaks to maintain her insulin levels."

In a second case supported by the DRC, Sunninghill Preparatory School admitted unintentionally discriminating against six-year-old pupil Rupert Knell last year.

The school decided that Rupert, who has insulin-dependant diabetes, could no longer attend without full-time support.

The DRC said the cases "illustrate the discrimination faced by people with diabetes".

# DRC funds advisers

The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) has agreed to fund a £1.4 million network of legal advisers to help disabled people fight discrimination.

The disability rights workers will be based at 14 Law Centres across England. The centres specialise in areas such as discrimination and employment.

New advisers will help disabled people secure their rights to access goods and services under the Disability Discrimination Act, and raise awareness of disability rights.

Bert Massie, chairman of the DRC, said: "There is more than enough evidence to tell us that disabled people, when experiencing discrimination, would prefer to consult with local organisations to get justice."

The DRC announced last year that it was to close its casework department in advance of its merger with other equality bodies in 2007.


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# See Scotland for free

The Scottish Executive (SE) is calling on disabled and older people to apply for new bus passes that will allow them free travel across Scotland.

The passes come into effect in April, and will provide free travel on local and long-distance buses at any time of day.

They will be available to all those eligible for existing, less generous schemes run by their own local authorities.

Capability Scotland welcomed the scheme, but called on the SE to extend it to people without mobility impairments, such as those with learning difficulties and mental health problems. Some councils restrict bus passes to physically disabled people.

An SE spokeswoman said future eligibility might be extended, depending on the results of its public consultation.

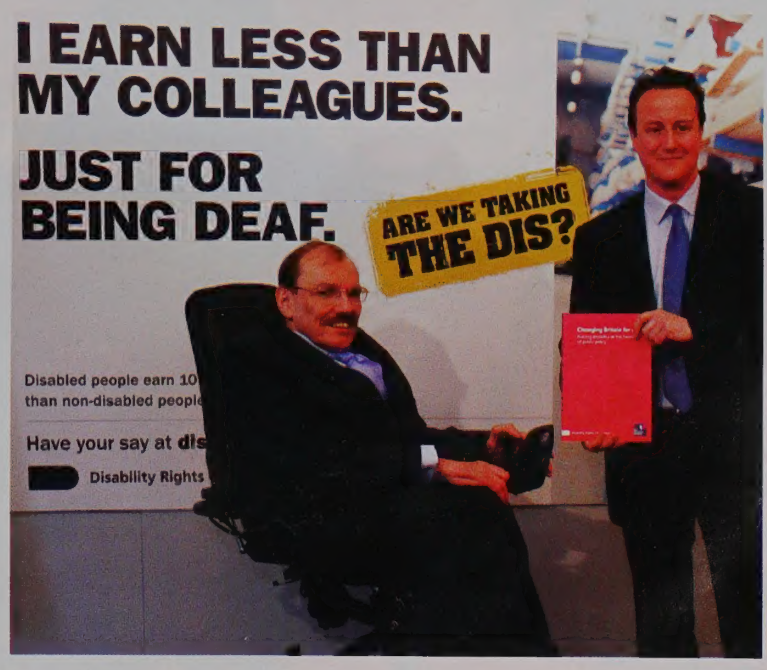
More than one million people will be eligible for the passes.

# DRC asks government to "stop taking the dis"

BY ELIZABETH CHOPPIN

Disabled people are in danger of being left behind by government policies, the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) warned last month as it launched a new, hard-hitting campaign* to highlight discrimination.

DRC chairman Bert Massie *(below left)* was joined at the Westminster launch by Conservative leader David Cameron *(below right)* and the minister for disabled people Anne McGuire, to promote the £1.2 million campaign, Are we taking the Dis?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Disability Rights

The poster, press and radio campaign underlines issues such as the rising number of people with learning difficulties and mental ill health being institutionalised, and the fact that disabled 16 year olds are twice as likely to be out of education or work than their non-disabled peers.

Mr Massie accused politicians of "lazy fatalism" and creating a "low expectations culture" around disabled people.

He said: "For some reason, and despite all the facts, public policy makers are not thinking about disability. It is considered something over there for the specialists to deal with. Something to do with wheelchairs and ramps."

He called on the government to increase parliamentary representation of disabled people and to set a 20 per cent target for disabled people on public bodies.

Ms McGuire said his idea sounded good "superficially" but she would want to discuss it with him further.

She said: "We need to be careful we do not assume that politicians do not reflect society as a whole. I know many politicians at Westminster and in local government who are blind and have MS and cancer."

Mr Cameron said the Conservatives were committed to pumping up support for carers, independent living and making the benefits system easier to use, which he joked required a "PhD in paperwork" to access.

He added: "There are still areas in our country where we need to do so much more to make services more accessible."

** Learn more about the campaign, tel: 08457 622 633, or visit www.drc-gb.org*

## In brief

### MS boss quits charity

The Multiple Sclerosis Society is looking for a new chief executive, after Mike O'Donovan announced he would step down at the end of April.

Mr O'Donovan joined the charity four years ago.

Deputy chief executive Ken Walker will become acting chief executive from May.

### 5000 bikers on board

The National Association for Bikers with a Disability* is celebrating after signing up its 5,000th member.

The Manchester-based charity provides grants to adapt motorcycles and motor-tricycles and offers information, advice and support to disabled people in the UK and Ireland.

**NABD tel: 0870 7590603 or visit www.nabd.org.uk*

# Govt must step up action in stairwells

Campaigners have welcomed a report urging the government to take steps to make common areas in residential housing more accessible, but warned it could be "just more words".

The Review Group on Common Parts (RGCP), commissioned by the government and made up of civil servants and representatives of disabled people's groups, recommended new laws to improve access in common areas such as stairwells and lobbies.

The law currently only allows those who rent their homes to obtain their landlord's permission to make adaptations inside their homes, rather than in the building's common areas.

The report said: "Some disabled people who need adjustments made to the common parts, so that they can get from their home to the street, can be confined to their homes."

The group also called for the government to issue guidance to landlords, increase Disabled Facilities Grant funding and provide ways to resolve disputes about common areas.

Virginia Shaw, director of the National Disabled Persons Housing Service (HoDis) and a member of RGCP, said she had received a letter from the minister for disabled people, Anne McGuire, which confirmed the report had been sent to ministers.

Ms Shaw added: "What is needed now is some action."

A spokeswoman for the Department for Work and Pensions said: "The report itself notes that some issues are extremely complex and still remain to be resolved. The government is now considering the report to reach agreement on the best way forward."

# Signing boost

A new £2.7million scheme will boost the number of British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters in Wales.

The scheme, funded by the Welsh Assembly Government and the European Union, will help the 3,000 deaf people in Wales who use BSL as their first language.

Jane Hutt, the equalities minister, said: "Often a sign language user has to wait up to eight weeks to secure an interpreter to see their GP, or discuss their child's education with a teacher. This cannot be right."

The scheme will provide training programmes for 36 interpreters and grants for another nine trainees.

It will also train more BSL tutors, support colleges to develop BSL courses, develop a postgraduate BSL course and help public bodies deliver services in BSL.

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# Service concern as belt tightens

BY ELIZABETH CHOPPIN

A funding squeeze in Northamptonshire has had a grim effect on services for disabled people in the county, campaigners have warned.

Disabled People Alliance Northamptonshire (DPAN) said the Centre for Independent Living (CIL) it runs will lose its direct payments contract to the large, non-user led charity Shaw Trust from the end of March.

The news adds to growing concerns about cuts to disabled people's services across the country *(DN, January)*.

Wendy Gross, principal co-ordinator of DPAN, said she feared the council was sacrificing the local knowledge and expertise of the CIL for the more cost-efficient Shaw Trust, where less than one in six staff is disabled.

She said: "We're 100 per cent run and controlled by disabled people. There has been no recognition of the value of small, grass roots organisations. With 15 employees, we can't compete."

DPAN chairman John Smith said the closure of CILs goes against commitments set out in the government's Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People report.

He added: "Our experience is that disabled people are best equipped to know what suits disabled people."

Mr Smith also voiced concern about the closure of a day centre for disabled people and cuts to youth services for disabled children.

A Northamptonshire County Council spokeswoman denied cost was the sole reason for awarding the contract to Shaw Trust, and insisted a procurement process ensured "the best quality service at the best price".

She said: "Our low settlement from the government means that we have had to look at everything the council does and come up with inventive solutions."

Meanwhile, a Bristol-based disabled people's organisation faces closure if it does not secure emergency funds by the end of March.

The West of England Coalition of Disabled People (WECODP) has pleaded with supporters* to help raise £30,000 to bring it out of debt by the end of the financial year.

Chairperson Alun Davies said: "It will be a sad day if we have to close. It would mean that the very small number of organisations that are 100 per cent controlled, staffed and managed by disabled people is whittled down by one."

** WECODP, tel: 01179 420 721*

Royal visit: The Countess of Wessex *(right)* met Mencap campaigners and supporters at a reception she hosted at St James's Palace in late January. Guests included Mabel Cooper *(left)*, who spent years in a long-stay hospital but now lives independently in Croydon and campaigns for people with learning difficulties.

# Emirates airline dumps passenger in Australia

A disabled man was nearly stranded in Australia after an airline refused to fly him back to England because he was "too much trouble" on the first leg of his trip.

On arrival in Sydney from the UK, Emirates airline staff told relatives of wheelchair user Matthew Quinn, 69, from Coventry, who has learning difficulties and a speech impairment, that he could not fly back with them unless accompanied by a carer at his own expense.

At the end of his trip, he was forced to spend an extra £564 to fly home on Qantas Airways.

Mr Quinn's advocate, Edna Price, said he had taken the flight "many times" before without any problems, though not on Emirates.

Emirates was informed of Mr Quinn's needs before take-off in Birmingham. But Ms Price said four staff members carried him to the toilet on the flight even though he only needed minimal assistance to walk.

She added: "A person even went into the toilet with him. The whole dignity process went out the window."

An Emirates spokeswoman said the airline was investigating the situation after the family lodged an official complaint in late January.

She said there would not have been a refund or apology to Mr Quinn until after the investigation was completed.

She said: "It is not our policy to refuse someone their return flight unless something has happened to make the airline believe that it is not safe."


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# Council failed

A council that caused a disabled man to live in unsuitable housing for two years has been told to pay him £2,650 compensation.

John Adam*, who has a mobility impairment, complained to the local government ombudsman that the London Borough of Barnet had not properly considered his application for a Disabled Facilities Grant.

It found that council failed to tell Mr Adam it did not normally approve grants for home extensions and delayed processing his application. They were told to improve procedures.

**Not his real name*

• *Ombudsman guide, page 37*

# WHO HAS THE MOST INFLUENCE?

***DN*'s search for the UK's most influential disabled people is hotting up, but it's your final chance to send us your nominations.**

After you have made your nominations, a panel of leading disabled people will draw up a shortlist to show who has the most significant impact on the lives of the UK population.

Nominations have highlighted people from across the public spectrum; the arts, science, sport and, of course, the disability field. We are not giving out awards and we are not searching for the most popular disabled person – instead we are looking for disabled people who have made a significant impact on all members of the public.

Who do you think has the most influence? Make your nomination, and be in with a chance of winning £50, by filling in the form or visiting *DNonline* at www.disabilitynow.org.uk

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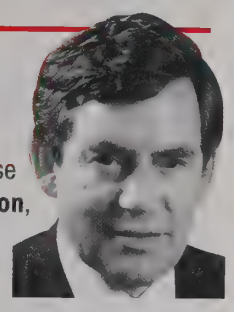
## YOUR NOMINATIONS

### Readers make their choices



I think **Gordon Brown**, (*right*) but only because he is the money man rather than because he's done something specific for disability rights. Otherwise, **Bert Massie**, **David Grayson**, **Phil Friend**, **Tom Shakespeare**, **Mat Fraser** and **Jane Campbell** are all worthy of votes.
**Ben**

I believe that **Alison Lapper** and **Tanni Grey Thompson** are the most influential disabled people in the UK. They are both strong, successful women in their own fields who have become mothers. I believe they are what positive role models should be.
**Natasha Rainey**

## SEND US YOUR NOMINATIONS

Fill in this form and send it to the address at the bottom – or fill out the form online – to nominate the disabled person you think is most influential in the UK.

Name:

Phone number:

Email address:

Occupation:

Are you disabled? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Are you employed by a disability organisation? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, which one?

Do you belong to any disability organisation(s)? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If so, which one/s?

Please tell us, in no more than 100 words for each person, who you think the UK's most influential disabled people are and why? (You can name more than one and continue on a separate sheet of paper if you wish):

Would you like your nomination to remain confidential (anonymous quotes may be used)? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Send your nominations to "Influential people", Freepost, Disability Now, 6 Market Road, London, N7 9PW
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# Paralympics team on form for Turin

BY PRIYA KOTECHA

Great Britain's sledge hockey team continued their preparation for the Winter Paralympics in Turin this month, with a win and two draws against Sweden in late January.

The team recorded a 3-2 victory in the first of three friendly matches, their first success over the Swedes in 25 years, with goals from Ian Warner, David French and Nathan Stevens.

The second match started in GB's favour with three quick-fire goals from Stevens, French and Richard Whitehead, but the Swedes came back to level, before each team scored another goal to record a 4-4 draw.

British athletes will also compete in the wheelchair curling event, which makes its debut at the Games - with strong hopes of home medal success.

The five-strong Scottish team of Frank Duffy, Michael McCreadie, Tom Killin, Angie Malone and Ken Dickson, has a tough start, with Denmark and Switzerland on the opening day of competition.

DSUK

But the reigning world champions remain on top form after clinching the Open Czech Wheelchair Curling Championships in November *(DN, January)*.

The third event is alpine skiing, which has produced all of Britian's nine medals at previous winter games in 1992 and 1994.

Sean Rose, Russell Docker and Liz Miller *(pictured)*, all members of the British Adaptive Ski team, make up the squad and will be aiming to secure Britain's first medal at the Games in 12 years.

There will be no GB representation in the cross-country skiing or biathlon events.

The nine days of competition begin on 11 March.

# Sailing stars victorious

Great Britain's sonar crew successfully retained their title at this year's World Disabled Sailing Championships in Perth, Australia.

John Robertson, Hannah Stodel and Stephen Thomas raced to victory on the final day – winning two and coming second in the third race – to finish 12 points clear of second-placed Germany.

John Robertson became the first captain in the history of the sonar – a boat usually used for disabled sailing events – to successfully defend the world championships.

Great British sailing star Helena Lucas narrowly lost out on the gold medal in the 2.4 metre race, taking silver with 20.5 points, three and a half points behind Heiko Kroeger of Germany, who clinched victory in the final race.

## SPORTS DIARY

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**Media coverage** 26 March, Sunday Grandstand – BBC Two, 2pm
**More information** www.paralympicgames.torino2006.org

### Commonwealth Games
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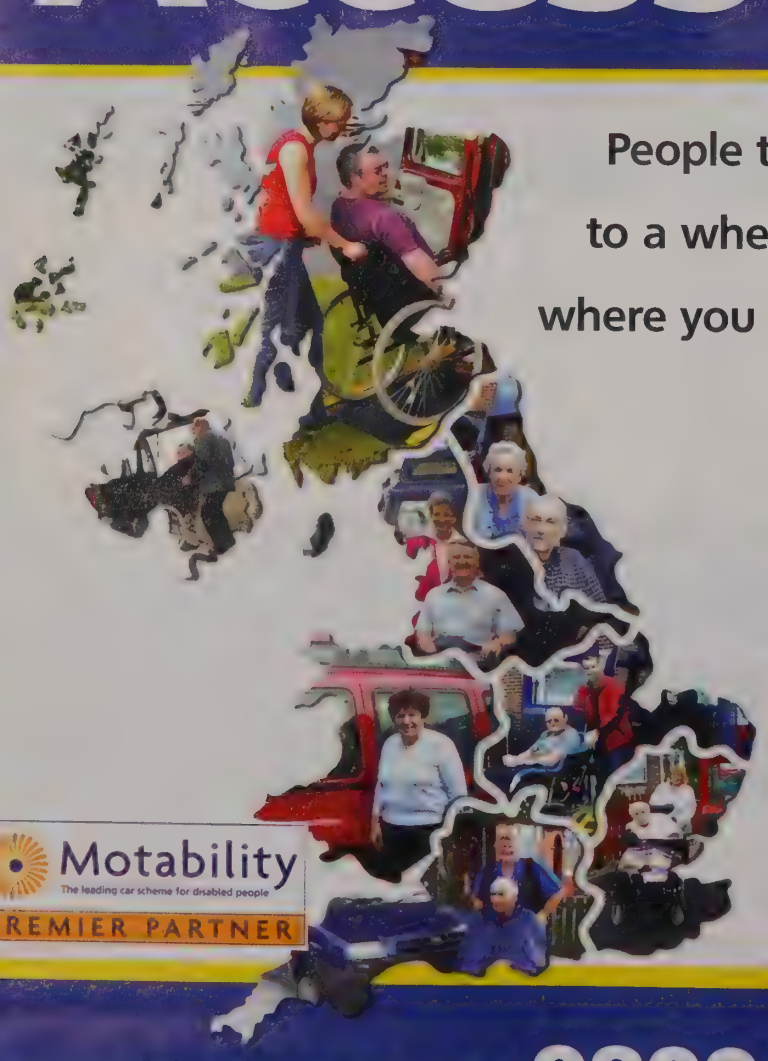

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# Scrap cancer prescription charges, says new report

BY **JOHN PRING**

Nearly one in six breast cancer patients have not taken drugs they need because of the cost, according to a new report*.

The Breast Cancer Care (BCC) report called on the government to scrap prescription charges for cancer treatment.

Nearly half of patients surveyed have had financial problems because of prescription charges, which can reach hundreds of pounds a year.

All prescription charges in Wales will be scrapped next year, with the Scottish Executive examining similar proposals.

Bridget Warr *(right)*, who was diagnosed with breast cancer a year ago, spoke at the launch of a BCC campaign in Westminster last month.

From next year, she will have to pay for long-term treatment.

She said: "I just assumed that if you had cancer, you would not have to pay for prescriptions."

A Department of Health spokeswoman said the health select committee was conducting an inquiry into NHS charges.

But she added: "In England, our policy is to use the finite resources of the NHS to give priority to helping people who may have difficulty in paying charges, rather than extending the exemption arrangements. However, more than 87 per cent of all NHS prescription items are dispensed free of charge."

Those who already get free prescriptions include some people with long-term conditions such as diabetes, many people on low incomes, pregnant women and older people.

** Prescription for Change, tel: 020 7384 2984 or visit www.breastcancercare.org.uk*

## Concern over dementia advice

New proposals could see Alzheimer's drugs denied to people in the early and later stages of dementia.

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) had previously said four drugs would not be available on the NHS for anyone with Alzheimer's.

But new draft guidance states three of the drugs – donepezil, galantamine and rivastigmine – could now be considered for people with "moderate" Alzheimer's. A fourth drug – memantine – would not be recommended. A consultation ended last month. Final guidance is expected in July.

NICE guidance in 2001 said donepezil, galantamine and rivastigmine should be used on all patients until no longer effective. New guidance will only apply to new patients.

# Homes fail on medication

Nearly half of all nursing and care homes in England fail to meet national minimum standards on handling medication, according to care inspectors.

The Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) said in a new report* that more than 3,000 out of nearly 8,000 homes for younger adults failed to meet minimum standards.

Mistakes included giving the wrong drugs to residents and allowing untrained staff to handle drugs.

Dame Denise Platt, CSCI chair, said it was "vital" that all care homes treated the issue with the "utmost seriousness".

But Action on Elder Abuse (AEA) said it was "dismayed" the report was similar to one CSCI published two years ago.

Gary FitzGerald, chief executive of AEA, said: "I'd like to know what the commission has been doing for the past two years that has enabled the situation to remain unchanged."

A CSCI spokeswoman said 80 per cent of homes had reached the minimum standards at some point in the last three years but failed to sustain "reasonable performance".

She said CSCI took "a tough stance" with poor homes but it was for owners and staff to "fulfil their duty of care".

She said CSCI would focus on medication in inspections, and help homes raise standards.

The Healthcare Commission has agreed to monitor how primary care trusts work with homes on medication.

And CSCI called on the National Patient Safety Agency to help homes learn from drug errors.

** Handled with Care?, tel: 0845 015 0120, www.csci.org.uk*

## Drugs at risk

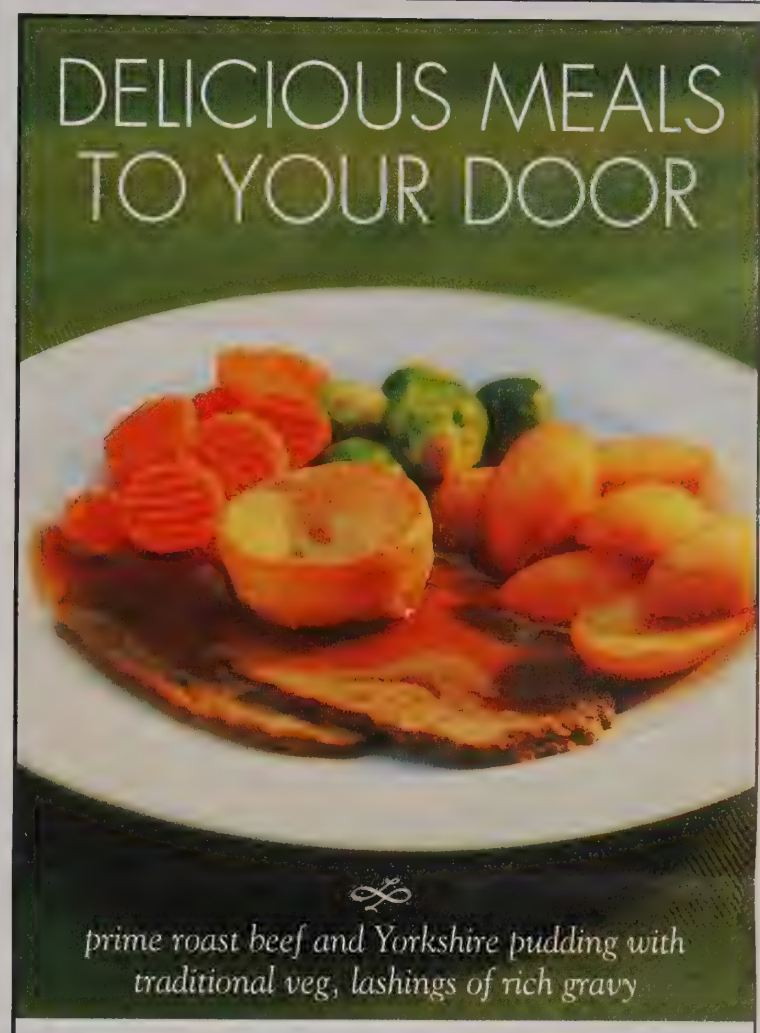
People with malignant brain tumours could be denied "vital and effective" treatment, if a government advisory body confirms draft guidelines on two drugs.

Three brain tumour groups said they were "outraged" at the preliminary recommendations from the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE).

The Samantha Dickson Research Trust, Brain Tumour UK and the International Brain Tumour Alliance called on NICE to change its advice. A consultation ended last month.

NICE said it would not recommend the use of the chemotherapy drug temozolomide, or of carmustine implants, anti-cancer "wafers" inserted into the brain during surgery, for people with "high grade" brain tumours or those that are "highly malignant and progressive".

Research found temozolomide increased survival rates and maintained quality of life for many patients with newly-diagnosed tumours.



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# White paper pledges 'more

The new health and social care white paper was warmly recieved, but lingering concerns remain over the welfare of people with learning difficulties. John Pring investigates

Disability organisations have broadly welcomed the government's new white paper*, which aims to build closer links between health and social care services and give disabled people "more choice and a louder voice".

But they have also raised serious concerns about elements of the white paper and called on the government to fill what they say are major gaps.

Health Secretary Patricia Hewitt *(below right)*, while launching the paper, said it was vital for "health and social care to work more closely together".

She says she wants to shift five per cent of NHS resources away from hospitals and into primary care over the next ten years.

The white paper will see closer working between social care and health bodies and care plans for all disabled people with long-term care and health needs.

It also includes a reminder that problems with funding and charging for care services are being reviewed as part of an independent inquiry into local government.

And there will be an expansion in the use of direct payments and individual budgets, which give disabled people more choice and control over their services.

**'This white paper recognises that public services must work across organisational boundaries'**

Mrs Hewitt says: "We expect local authorities to set challenging targets for the take-up of direct payments."

The white paper also says the government will address its long-standing promise to introduce regular health checks for people with learning difficulties and to find homes in the community for the 3,000 people with learning difficulties still living in NHS residential "campuses".

There is an emphasis on improving palliative care services, plans to help more disabled people manage their own long-term conditions, a pledge to expand the use of assistive technology in the home and more help for the country's six million carers.

Touch and go: The white paper includes proposals to boost the use of assistive technology in the home and give disabled people more choice and control over services

Mrs Hewitt says: "This white paper recognises that public services must work across organisational boundaries to meet people's needs. We are making this easier through changes to the way the NHS and social care will work, including how they commission services.

"The plans will help people to access community services throughout all stages of their lives and in places and at times that suit them."

The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) says there is "much to commend in the white paper", such as piloting individual budgets for social care.

But the DRC criticises the "weak" commitment to tackling the health inequalities faced by people with learning difficulties and mental health problems.

And Bert Massie, chairman of the DRC, criticised the "steep increase" in admissions to residential and nursing care for people with learning difficulties and mental health conditions that has occurred since 1997.

He says: "For some disabled people, our ambitions for their freedom are still circumscribed by notions born in the Victorian era.

"The white paper is silent on the Prime Minister's strategy unit recommendations that disabled people should now be consulted on the merits of a right to request not to live in residential care. This is now urgently overdue."

The social care charity Turning Point welcomed the white paper's emphasis on integrating health and social care, as in its own Connected Care pilot project.

Lord Adebowale, Turning Point's chief executive, says: "The white paper points the way to radical new ways of reaching and supporting people by giving a stronger local voice to people about their health care and how money is spent in delivering connected health and social care that is appropriate to them."

The deafblind charity Sense welcomed the white paper's aims to give disabled people more choice and control over their services, and increase "preventative services".

Sue Brown, Sense's head of campaigns and public policy, says: "The integration of health and social care services should be applauded if it leads to a

more efficient allocation of resources. This could benefit people with multiple disabilities who deal with a range of different services."

But she called on the government to increase funding of social care.

Carers UK welcomed many of the measures in the white paper, but also called on the government to "back up these promises with the necessary resources".

And Hazel Morgan, co-director of the Foundation for

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# choice and a louder voice'

## white paper promises

### Healthcare
- Shift spending away from hospitals and towards primary care
- Extend choice through new GP practices and extended opening hours
- New generation of community hospitals that will offer access to social services, minor surgery and outpatient facilities

### Integrating social care and health
- By 2008, all primary care trusts and local authorities to have joint health and social care teams to enable them to support those with long-term conditions and the most complex needs
- By 2008, everyone with long-term health and social care needs should have a care plan that covers those needs, if they want one. By 2010, all those with long-term conditions to be offered care plans
- All people with long-term social care and health needs and their carers to receive an "information prescription" that will show how to find further information and advice about their own condition

### Direct payments
- Extension of the direct payments scheme, which provides people with cash in lieu of care services
- National campaign to increase awareness of direct payments

### Individual budgets
- Launch another 12 projects this year to pilot individual budgets, which bring various sources of social care income for a disabled person into one pot
- National implementation of individual budgets, possibly as early as 2009, if pilots prove successful
- Possible pilots to test extending individual budgets to disabled children

### Funding
- Problems with funding and charging for care services being considered as part of inquiry into local government by Sir Michael Lyons

### Mental health
- Strengthen efforts to improve public understanding of mental health
- Two pilots testing effectiveness of psychological therapies in helping people with mild or moderate mental health problems remain in or return to work
- Provide access to evidence-based psychological therapies and employment advisers
- Work with professional bodies to develop standards and regulation of counsellors and therapists

### Palliative care
- Ensure all staff who look after dying patients are properly trained
- Establish networks including hospitals, hospices, community palliative care services to deliver end-of-life care
- Invest in community-based palliative care services

### Risk
- Develop national guidelines on risks in social care, particularly those faced by people on direct payments and individual budgets who employ unregulated and untrained staff

### Long-term conditions
- Expand Expert Patients Programme (EPP), which helps disabled people manage their own long-term conditions, from 12,000 places a year to more than 100,000 by 2012.
- Treble investment in the EPP

### Independence
- Collect international evidence on assistive technology and home monitoring technology to help support people to live at home
- Launch project that aims to use assistive and home monitoring technology to achieve "significant gains" in quality of life and reduce hospital use

### People with learning difficulties
- Decide how to deliver regular health checks for people with learning difficulties
- Aim to empty all NHS residential campuses for people with learning difficulties by the end of the decade

### Carers
- Update and extend the government's 1999 strategy for carers
- Establish a national helpline for carers
- Improve emergency respite support for carers
- Fund an expert carers programme

People with Learning Disabilities, says it has been calling for annual health checks for people with learning difficulties for the last ten years and "hopes that the commitment to regular checks will be speedily implemented".

The Department of Health says there was no need for new legislation and the results of a major consultation had already been incorporated into the white paper.

**'The white paper points the way to radical new ways of reaching and supporting people'**

Campaigners will watch implementation carefully over the next five to ten years, to see whether the government fulfils its promise to give disabled people "more choice and a louder voice".

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# Hutton's green paper

The government's long-awaited green paper on welfare reform has raised just as many questions as it has answered. Priya Kotecha investigates the reforms and what they will mean for disabled people

After waiting months for the government to unveil its plans for welfare reform, disabled people are still confused over what the proposals will mean for them.

The long-awaited launch of the green paper* in late January has many of the 2.7 million Incapacity Benefit (IB) claimants worried they may be forced into work or face a cut in benefits.

The reform package is subject to a consultation process, before the government brings in new legislation.

Bert Massie, chairman of the Disability Rights Commission, says: "There are elements in the proposals which look helpful, but we need to see more detail before we can be reassured they will improve opportunities for disabled people."

The government plans to reduce the number of people on IB by one million over the next decade, with particular emphasis on reducing the number of new claimants.

The move is expected to save £7 billion a year, but disabled people and their organisations are worried about how this will happen in practice.

Under the new proposals, existing claimants who are deemed fit to find work will be expected to volunteer for work-focused interviews.

But the green paper also says that existing IB claimants will be assessed more frequently and will increasingly have to attend interviews.

> 'There are elements in the proposals which look helpful, but we need to see more detail before we can be reassured'

Despite this, Anne McGuire, minister for disabled people, denies that existing claimants will be forced to attend work-focused interviews when the Pathways to Work programme is rolled out nationally by 2008.

She says: "There is no need to fear. What I would say to existing IB claimants is that we are prepared to work with you and, if you want to move yourself back into work, we are prepared to give you the support that would allow you to make that decision."

Disability groups warn that any compulsion will "undermine" the welcome initiatives to support disabled people back into work.

Sophie Corlett, director of policy at mental health charity Mind, says: "The majority of people with mental health problems want to return to employment as soon as possible. But they need to be helped and supported, not goaded and ultimately forced to return to work before they are ready to do so."

Campaigners also argue that the green paper does not address the support needs of many existing claimants who want to find work.

Kate Nash, chief executive of RADAR, says: "For people already on IB, the plans do not provide a support structure that guarantees help to find work. Without support mechanisms the process does not address the long-term claimants."

Before work-focused interviews can take place, existing claimants will undergo a revised version of the existing Personal Capability Assessment (PCA) to see if their condition has changed.

From 2008, new claimants will apply for the Employment and Support Allowance, which will replace the existing Incapacity Benefit and basic Jobseekers Allowance. Eventually, existing claimants will also be transferred on to the new system.

A claimant who becomes eligible for the new allowance will be assigned a key worker. As a condition of receiving the new allowance, they will be expected to develop a personal action plan, plotting how they will return to work, if their condition allows them to do so.

New and existing claimants with severe impairments will receive a higher rate of benefit, but it remains unclear how much higher this will be. They will still be able to seek work, should they wish to do so.

However, disability activists argue that despite the government's pledge to roll out Pathways to Work, which it claims will cost £360 million, the proposed reforms will only work if employers are open-minded about employing disabled people.

Lorna Reith, chief executive of Disability Alliance, says: "The government should do more to encourage employers to recruit disabled people."

Plans to reform the IB appeals process "so that the need for appeals is minimised" will also be of crucial importance to disabled people.

Last year (*DN*, *August 2005*), a report revealed that 50 per cent of IB decisions are overturned on appeal, due to a "failure to consider all relevant evidence the first time around and the standard of decision-making at the time of the initial application".

The green paper suggests the new system will aim to reduce

DRC

To work or not to work, that is the question: Many disabled people are confused over welfare reforms, which aim to put one million people back to work despite entrenched discrimination in the workplace

## Pathways to Work

First launched in October 2003, Pathways to Work offers early, sustained support to help disabled people return to work. There are ten pilots in operation across the country, with a further six planned between April and October this year.

**The programme includes:**

- Support from a "highly skilled" personal adviser, and contact for the first eight months after the claim is launched
- NHS rehabilitation support so people can learn to manage their condition, with a view to getting back to work
- Access to partnerships with the New Deal for Disabled People – employment advisers could be from voluntary or private sectors
- £40 a week return to work credit, once you get a job

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# has a lot to answer for

## Green paper summary

- Reduce the number of people on Incapacity Benefit by one million over the next decade, starting from 2008
- Increase the number of people leaving benefits for work, through Pathways to Work, which will be rolled out nationally by 2008
- Reduce the number of people leaving work, through a programme aimed at improving workplace health
- Reform Statutory Sick Pay
- Reform the Personal Capability Assessment, so that it focuses on assessing people's capability for work, rather than just their entitlement to benefits
- Introduce the new Employment Support Allowance for new claimants, which will replace the existing Incapacity Benefit and the basic Jobseekers Allowance
- Existing claimants, except those with severe impairments, will be reassessed every year. They will also attend two work-focused interviews a year. It is unclear whether these will be mandatory
- Existing and new claimants with severe impairments will receive a higher rate of benefit
- Initiatives to help support GPs and healthcare professionals to work more closely with disabled people, to ensure they understand the importance of work in rehabilitation
- Employment advisers placed in GPs' surgeries to update disabled people on the support and work options available
- Reform of the IB appeals process, to reduce number of appeals
- Disabled people can return to their previous benefit levels for the first two years of making a return to work, if they have to leave the job

the number of appeals, by ensuring initial decisions are correct and explaining the process thoroughly to claimants.

The DWP has also defended delays in publishing accessible versions of its green paper.

As *DN* went to press a spokeswoman said the DWP was expected to publish an easy-read version of the green paper, for people with learning difficulties, towards the end of February. She added the delay was because the green paper itself was not finalised until 23 January.

"It is so technical that to get it right is a bit of a longer task," she said.

A Braille version was available within 24 hours of the green paper being published and large print and audio versions were available from 7 February, two weeks after the green paper's publication.

She said DWP staff were happy to help people put together their response to the green paper, and could grant an extension to the consultation period if necessary "on a case by case basis".

But a spokesman for People First (Self Advocacy), a London-based charity run by people with learning difficulties, says: "We are worried that not enough thought about people with learning difficulties has gone into this paper and our fears have been increased by the fact that the government has not even thought about giving us a fair chance to read the paper and give our views."

Jeremy Hunt MP, the new Conservative shadow minister for disabled people, says creating one million new jobs is "a huge task".

> "The government should do more to encourage employers to recruit disabled people"

He says his party "broadly supports" the government's reforms, but he adds: "Creating equality of opportunity for people with disabilities involves giving them the opportunity to work that other people take for granted – the litmus test for reforms is whether they will achieve that or are simply a money-saving device to reduce the huge cost of Incapacity Benefit."

He is also concerned that the main focus for meeting the target of getting one million people off IB will be "severe restrictions on new claims and then relying on natural wastage, as people reach 65, to get the numbers down", rather than supporting existing claimants who want to find jobs.

He also points to "serious issues about the training of benefits staff", particularly the lack of understanding about mental illness.

He adds: "Many disabled people want practical encouragement and help from trained professionals rather than any ham-fisted compulsion, which is why good training of staff is critical."

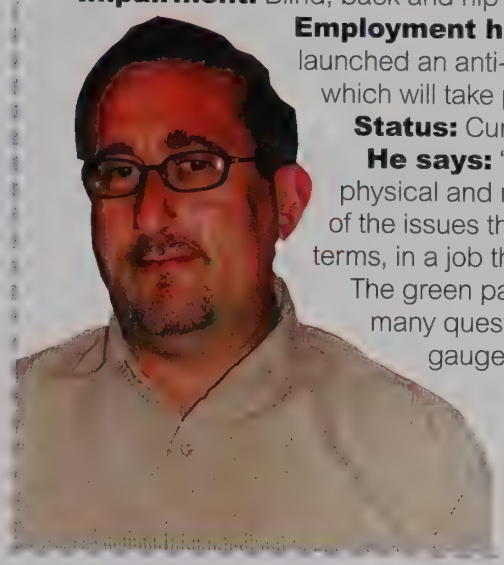
The government says it will engage with disability organisations during the consultation to decide how its IB reforms will work in practice.

But with the consultation period lasting until 21 April, and the government hoping to see its reforms become law before the summer recess in July, it remains to be seen if disability groups can ensure the new system works for disabled people and not against them.

** A New Deal for Welfare: Empowering People Back to Work, tel: 020 7219 3890 or visit www.dwp.gov.uk*

**Have your say at:**
*www.disabilitynow.org.uk* or send letters to the editor at 6 Market Road, London, N7 9PW

**Name:** Graeme Ellis, 48
**From:** Lancaster
**Impairment:** Blind, back and hip problems, depression and anxiety



**Employment history:** Has not worked since February 2005 and launched an anti-discrimination case against his former employers, which will take place in March

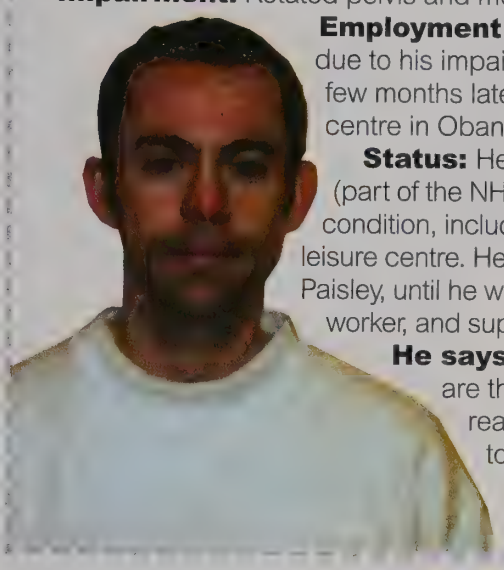
**Status:** Currently claiming IB

**He says:** "It worries me that people are going to assess your physical and mental ability to work, when they have no awareness of the issues that disabled people deal with. I want to work on my terms, in a job that challenges me.

The green paper on welfare reform is so woolly, there are so many questions that John Hutton has not answered. We cannot gauge how it will affect us.

Disabled people come from various education backgrounds, just like non-disabled people, but they are not matched to the right jobs, because people have this perception that disabled people are not able to work in challenging work environments."

**Name:** Iain Campbell, 35
**From:** Oban, Argyle
**Impairment:** Rotated pelvis and mobility difficulties



**Employment history:** Had to leave the army in February 2002, due to his impairment, and started claiming Incapacity Benefit a few months later. In March 2005, he decided to go to his local job centre in Oban - one of the Pathways to Work pilot sites

**Status:** He was assessed by the Condition Management Team (part of the NHS) and given helpful advice on managing his condition, including the possibility of physiotherapy at the local leisure centre. He began volunteering for an employment agency in Paisley, until he was offered paid jobs as a part-time youth literacy worker, and support worker for Argyll and Bute Council

**He says:** "There is no rush, nobody is pressuring you, they are there to support you. I think people have to realise there is nothing to be frightened of. Pathways to Work is a fantastic programme, but people have to want to return to work before they can get the support on offer."

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| – Middle | 40.55 | 41.65 |
| – Lowest | 16.05 | 16.50 |
| Mobility component | | |
| – Higher | 42.30 | 43.45 |
| – Lower | 16.05 | 16.50 |
| **WORKING TAX CREDIT** | | |
| Disability components (£/annum) | | |
| – Disabled worker element | 2,165 | 2,225 |
| – Severe disability element | 920 | 945 |
| **CHILD TAX CREDIT** | | |
| Disability components (£/annum) | | |
| – Disabled child element | 2,285 | 2,350 |
| – Severe disability element | 920 | 945 |
| **SEVERE DISABLEMENT ALLOWANCE** | | |
| Basic rate | 46.20 | 47.45 |
| Age related addition | | |
| – Higher rate | 16.05 | 16.50 |
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| **INCAPACITY BENEFIT** | | |
| Long-term Incapacity Benefit | 76.45 | 78.50 |
| Short-term Incapacity Benefit (under pension age) | | |
| – Lower rate | 57.65 | 59.20 |
| – Higher rate | 68.20 | 70.05 |
| Short-term Incapacity Benefit (over pension age) | | |
| – Lower rate | 73.35 | 75.35 |
| – Higher rate | 76.45 | 78.50 |
| **RETIREMENT PENSION** (A or B) | 82.05 | 84.25 |
| **STATUTORY SICK PAY** | | |
| – Earnings threshold | 82.00 | 84.00 |
| – Standard rate | 68.20 | 70.05 |
| **INDUSTRIAL INJURIES DISABLEMENT PENSION** | | |
| 18 and over, or under 18 with dependants | | |
| – 100% | 123.80 | 127.10 |
| – 20% | 24.76 | 25.42 |
| Under 18 | | |
| – 100% | 75.85 | 77.90 |
| – 20% | 15.17 | 15.58 |
| Constant attendance allowance | | |
| – Exceptional rate | 99.20 | 101.80 |
| – Intermediate rate | 74.40 | 76.35 |
| – Normal maximum rate | 49.60 | 50.90 |
| – Part-time rate | 24.80 | 25.45 |
| – Exceptionally severe disablement allowance | 49.60 | 50.90 |
| **WIDOW'S PENSION** | 82.05 | 84.25 |
| **EARNINGS RULES** | | |
| – Carer's Allowance | 82.00 | 84.00 |
| – Limit of earnings from Councillor's Allowance | 78.00 | 81.00 |
| – Permitted work earnings limit | 78.00 | 81.00 |

THANKS TO VANESSA DAVIS, DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE (TEMP), DISABILITY ALLIANCE, FOR PREPARING THE UPRATING

# Boost your benefits

Your Benefits may rise in April, but with increasing living costs Jim Allison urges readers to think about all possible routes to finance

As always benefits have been increased in line with inflation, but increases this year will be wiped out effectively by a number of spiralling costs of living, including Council Tax and gas and electricity prices.

Consider too that, according to recent research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, almost one third of working-age disabled adults live in income poverty.

So why, for example, does the government ignore *DN*'s campaign that demands Winter Fuel Payments for severely disabled people? Pensioners should be entitled to them, but should they really be freely available to those over 60 who choose to live abroad during the winter months or permanently in hot countries?

And once again, carers have been left out in the cold. In the government's proposals on welfare reform there is nothing on Carer's Allowance (CA) even though carers save the government millions by keeping disabled people out of residential care. From April, CA will rise to just £46.95 – less than £1.35 per hour for a 35-hour week.

So, it is essential you claim all the benefits you are entitled to – there is a high rate of underclaims.

The easiest way to check is by contacting the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) benefits enquiry line*. Also try the Community Legal Services** and there are a number of online benefits calculators***.

Finally, I have found a section on the DWP website****, where you can find out which government departments are responsible for the different types of financial support and more about how income can affect your entitlement to certain support.

There are a number of other ways to enhance your income or help with costs of disability, which receive little publicity.

For example, if you live in a bigger property because your disability makes it difficult to live in a smaller building, you may be entitled to a reduction in Council Tax which is charged at the band below. This will be in addition to other Council Tax discounts.

Free NHS prescriptions are available for those over 60, those on means-tested benefits and for a small number of people with certain illnesses. You can also get them for disabled people who have a continuing physical disability that prevents them from leaving home without the help of another person.

Disabled Facilities Grants are given out through local councils to help make homes more accessible. The amount paid is based on a means-test, although financial assessements for families with disabled children has recently been abolished. For disabled adults, savings above a certain amount are considered, but certain benefits, including Disability Living Allowance and Income Support, are generally ignored.

** Tel: 0800 88 22 00, bel-customer-services@dwp.gsi.gov.uk*

*** Tel: 0845 345 4345, www.clsdirect.org.uk*

**** www.entitledto.com*

***** http://www.direct.gov.uk/DisabledPeople/FinancialSupport/FinancialSupportArticles/fs/en?CONTENT_ID=10021263&chk=nxXY7%2B*

• **Jim Allison is a retired disability and welfare rights specialist**

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## CELEB SCENE

### DANNY CRATES

The success of Britain's Paralympic team has boosted competition, but dedicated new athletes are needed

As this is my first column, I had better introduce myself. I am an 800m runner. Internationally I compete in the class T46 (arm amputee), a condition I found myself in 11 years ago, after learning the hard way that humans come off worse when wrestling with cars.

The high point of my athletics career so far was winning Paralympic gold in Athens 2004, a medal I had worked towards and dreamed of for seven years.

Paralympic sport has a higher profile than ever and in order to succeed, athletes have to be dedicated.

I have been a full-time athlete for eight years now but I am able to work as well. For me this involves motivational speaking – full-time just means that athletics comes first.

My training regime is Saturday to Thursday, with Fridays off. I usually train twice a day during the week and once on weekends.

This time of the year is the hardest, as it is for many people. When it is freezing cold and wet I really wish that I did an indoor sport. Also, as a track athlete, I know it is still another four or five months until I start competing properly.

**'If you are reading this and thinking of a sport you enjoy, get training; London 2012 is fast approaching'**

Before you feel too sorry for me, there is a plus side to this time of year; it is not long until we are off for warm weather training. This year we are going to Brisbane, Australia – soft track athletes need a bit of warmth every now and again.

The National Lottery World-Class Performance Plan allows me to be a full-time athlete and train abroad.

Traditionally, our support has always been to a lesser degree than our non-disabled counterparts, but thankfully this is changing.

Obviously this support is one of the major reasons the Great Britain Paralympic team is so successful, finishing second on the medal table in Sydney and Athens.

However, we lack up-and-coming athletes. We have some stars of the future, but there is not much depth.

If you are reading this and thinking of a sport you enjoy, get training; London 2012 is fast approaching. Can you think of anything more exciting than competing in your chosen sport in front of a home crowd?

I always thought that international athletics was about travelling to, and competing in, other countries. But I found out in 2003, at the world indoor championships in Birmingham, that the real buzz is when you compete at home, with the crowd behind you. That is a feeling that lifts you to another level.

**Danny is a Paralympic champion and regularly appears on television**

## YOUTH SPEAK

### KATE CARYER

Even with the best of intentions, our abilities can be overlooked

It is not easy being a media star and dealing with society's reluctance to accept my intelligence.

A while ago, the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) asked me to write the history of my education.

It is a catalogue of disasters thanks to people who have underestimated my ability – supposed specialists in the area of cerebral palsy (CP).

The problem is, I not only have a normal brain, I am a smartass.

A report from the Spastics Society (now Scope) found me "a child within the superior range of intelligence" at four years old. I am still unsure how I managed to nick somebody like Stephen Fry's results in my infancy – that is smart.

But throughout my time at school I was expected to be at, and therefore achieved, a below normal level.

So I sent my story to the DRC, who used it as a case study highlighting the low expectations society has of people like me.

A couple of weeks ago, I was asked if they could film me telling bits of my tale. Being the media hog that I am, I was definitely up to having a film crew around me for a day, so I jumped at the chance.

As part of the deal I was asked to attend a speech by DRC chair Bert Massie.

When I arrived at the venue, I saw printed material in a range of formats, which catered for different abilities.

I thought it was great, and even considered praising the folks at reception.

But when my personal assistant was loaded up with papers about the campaign – meant to improve understanding of disabled people's abilities – they gave me an easy-to-read and understand version.

Even the most aware people can get it wrong sometimes.

**Kate, 22, is studying for a degree in performing arts and volunteers for 1Voice Communicating Together**

## WORLD VIEW

### YANNIS VARDAKASTANIS

Despite ongoing concerns, the UN Convention has come far

The seventh session of the committee drafting a new UN convention on human rights for disabled people is over.

While further work is needed, I am most pleased about the progress made since negotiations started in 2003.

The final document is likely to be finalised this year thanks to increased involvement from disabled people's organisations, including the European Disability Forum (EDF) as part of the International Disability Caucus.

The Austrian presidency of the European Union has helped progress. Its delegation in New York, where the seventh session took place, has encouraged open talks and has a good understanding of disability rights.

So, we have moved forward on a number of contentious issues, such as on the legal capacity of disabled people, the denial of reasonable accommodation and specific support for disabled women and children.

The EDF is pleased that it pushed for a reference that particular attention should be paid to meeting the human rights of people with high support needs.

Of course, further negotiation is required on these and other issues, including protection from forced treatment.

For the first time in history, disabled people from all the European Union member states will be protected by such international legislation.

And as the convention is adopted by the UN General Assembly, it will contribute to change the lives of many more millions of people.

Work must go on, but for now let me say well done for the negotiation process that has already marked the history of the disability movement.

**Yannis is the president of the European Disability Forum**

## TOP TALK

### SIMONE ASPIS

Learning barriers in mainstream education need to be examined for the sake of young disabled people

For the first time in seven years I have switched from supporting families with their struggle for inclusive education, to considering a PhD in inclusive accreditation systems.

Does inclusive education just consist of teaching strategies in the classroom, providing appropriate equipment, differentiating the national curriculum and personalising learning plans?

Judging by published works, one may think so.

One area that always gets overlooked is the exam system underpinning our education system. Inclusive education can never happen unless we have a system that values every individual's achievements equally.

Some may say such an accreditation system exists - the Duke of Edinburgh Awards, where all young people leave with the same certificate even though each individual's achievements are different.

My investigation hopes to discover what is needed to ensure any accreditation system could be inclusive – perhaps the first PhD proposal of its type.

**'Inclusive education can never happen unless we have a system which values every individual's achievements equally'**

So my hunt begins for two open-minded PhD supervisors who may entertain my thesis.

I have scanned every university, and their education and inclusive education lecturers' interests – there has to be someone out there who is thinking about inclusive assessments for young disabled people, instead of just gender, race and class barriers.

I narrowed it down to a handful of universities where their lecturers interests match.

In defence of the accreditation systems which keeps these people in plum academic jobs, the lecturers tell me current accreditation is adequate for disabled people.

They advise me to steer my study into the psychology, disability and learning difficulties disciplines.

But, the disability studies route is not the way I want to proceed, so I will hang in there until someone takes an interest.

As I write this, I have lecturers from two universities interested in reading my previous paper, Oh the One Award for All*, which was published by Bolton Institute for Higher Learning several years ago.

I hope to convince academia that One Award For All is a real possibility, even though I miss working with families.

** www.inclusion-boltondata.org.uk/FrontPage/data36s.htm*

**Simone is a campaigner who works for the British Council of Disabled People**

# Church must learn lessons from scandals

## Disabled children have been abused by priests, but the Catholic Church has refused to hold inquiries that would help it learn lessons from its failures, says Margaret Kennedy

I began working with disabled children who had been abused in 1989. I was the first person in the UK to raise and research the issue. What I discovered was alarming.

Disabled children are three times more likely to be abused than non-disabled children.

Studies have shown between 50 and 90 per cent of people with learning difficulties have been sexually abused. For deaf children, 54 per cent of boys and 50 per cent of girls experience sexual abuse. Yet these children are marginalized and invisible in the child protection system. But it is only in the last few years I have noticed the sexual abuse of children and adults by clergy.

Father Michael Hill was jailed in 1997 for sexual abuse in Arundel and Brighton, with further charges in 2002.

He sexually abused a young man with learning difficulties, a boy with cerebral palsy and a child who was a wheelchair user.

Brother Ambrose Kelly, from the Brothers of Charity, was jailed in 1999 for a regime of sexual abuse involving young boys with learning difficulties in Cork, Ireland, that dated back to the 1950s.

But Brother Ambrose also abused victims with learning difficulties in Galway and Liverpool, illustrating how the Church moved sex offenders between areas and countries.

There was extensive sexual abuse of deaf children in nearly all the deaf schools in Ireland, all run by religious orders.

A Catholic priest also abused deaf children in England. In February 2005, Father Neil Gallanagh was given a derisory six-month suspended sentence for indecently assaulting two pupils of St John's Catholic School for Deaf Children in Boston Spa. A further 12 charges dating back to the 1970s were "left on file".

I failed to find out who placed him in this school and if anyone was aware of his history before he went there.

We know from Ireland's shocking Ferns inquiry that the Church authorities knew about nearly all sexually abusing priests before they were caught, often for many years.

When I tried to secure support for the deaf victims, I was told, by a Catholic Church representative in Leeds, that they "do not do outreach".

When I complained to the Catholic Office for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (COPCA), this policy was changed.

Deaf people cannot pick up the phone to ask for help and may not have known about COPCA. The Church must find survivors and offer them help.

In 1999, I discovered a male volunteer had sexually abused a woman with multiple sclerosis in a UK hospice run by nuns. The nuns, fearing a scandal, did not report him to the police and merely asked him to leave.

I reported him, he pleaded guilty and was placed on the sex offenders register.

The Catholic Church in the UK has refused all my calls for inquiries, thus keeping under wraps information that should be publicly available.

How was it that The Brothers of Charity allowed Brother Ambrose to move to Liverpool after abusing in Ireland? How many Liverpool victims did he have and are they getting help? Where did Father Neil Gallanagh come from? Who put him in the deaf school in Boston Spa? Why did the school take so many years to uncover his sexual abuse? Will there be an inquiry? What about sexually offending clergy being sent to Ireland from the UK and vice versa. Will this practice stop? Has anyone helped the disabled victims of Father Michael Hill? Why was Father Hill given a post at Gatwick Airport, despite knowing he was a sex offender? What will the Church do about sexually abusing nuns? We have had several victims contact us.

One thing is clear: sex offenders target the most vulnerable. We must be especially vigilant in our churches where there are disabled children and adults.

I raise these issues because many believe that having an impairment is a safety factor. But those who are disabled are far more vulnerable.

Margaret Kennedy, who is disabled, is chair and founder of Minister and Clergy Sexual Abuse Survivors (MACSAS), Post Office box 46933, London E8 1XA

**Speaking up: Margaret Kennedy receiving the Emma Humphries Memorial Prize in 2004 for her work on the clergy abuse of women and the abuse of disabled children**

KEY NOTES

## ANDY RICKELL

### Disabled people and their organisations need to get together and refocus to get their voice heard

Does it matter who I am? No, I do not have an identity problem, but I think, as a group, disabled people do and that adversely affects how the government treats us.

I have just read the Disability Right Commission's (DRC) paper *Changing Britain for good – Putting disability at the heart of public policy*.

It attempts to explain why the government has sidelined disability issues and shows that because disabled people have been treated as abnormal, they have been viewed differently and therefore excluded from society.

The DRC also proposes ten policy goals the government should target, but this implies all can be put right by the politicians.

Disability organisations and disabled people have work to do too. We need to re-think how we work together.

There is still too much focus on impairment rather than issues of disability, which undermines the collective political strength disabled people could have.

**'There is still too much focus on impairment'**

Historically, disability organisations have been set up for people with specific impairments.

The focused information they can provide is useful, but many have cultural baggage based on the medical model of disability.

Championing of their client group can be over-protective and lead to separate treatment from other disabled people and society as well as competition for funding.

We need to think differently about who we are. This should be thinking that recognises the over-arching importance of the rights-based social model, which brings all disabled people together politically while acknowledging the diversity and experience of impairment.

The government recognises more than 10 million of us disabled people – a massive number in potential political strength. We should try to make that strength real by finding a new way of thinking.

**Andy is executive director for diversity, politics and planning at Scope**

# Letters to the Editor

Send your letters to the acting editor Sarah Hobson, Disability Now, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW, minicom: 020 7619 7332, fax: 020 7619 7331, email: editor@disabilitynow.org.uk

## Change to building regulations no good

I refer to your article about the lady's problems with her wheelchair not fitting into a lift and doors in a new building *(DN, February)*.

You do not state the width of her wheelchair, but I suspect it is slightly over 800mm – the minimum width required by the Part M Building Regulations, which should be met to "satisfy" the Disability Discrimination Act.

Her problem lies in the Part M Building Regulations. We have a peculiar situation where inadequate provision can be defended because it meets inadequate building regulations. Until these are improved, the comment by the Disabiity Rights Commission that "a case would probably fail if the lift and doorway complied with Part M" will remain correct.

My wife, who is a wheelchair user, and myself, have been campaigning on this for years and I am mystified why none of the major disability bodies appear to have picked up on such concerns.

Despite recent revision to Part M of the building regulations (see BS8300:2001), our concerns remain.

There was a failure to incorporate research on spaces required by disabled people, which showed, for example, minimum turning circles and door widths needed to increase.

The findings are in Annex E of BS8300, but not applied to the main standards. If the average wheelchair measures 800mm wide, surely it makes sense that doorways need to be a minimum of 900mm wide to get through? Trust me, a standard wheelchair of 740mm in a 800mm space leaves no room for knuckles!

**Michael Moakler, Glasgow**

## No such thing as a mercy killing

When I first read of Andrew Wragg's killing of his severely disabled son Jacob I had some sympathy towards him.

Caring for a profoundly ill child whose future is drastically limited must put a severe strain on one's reasoning.

But having read your article on his and other so-called mercy killings I can now see the nonsense of the concept. There is no such thing as a mercy killing since any respite is meted on the killer, not the victim. As you rightly point out there is a very real danger in society deeming it OK to murder profoundly ill children.

There have been some high-profile cases recently where we have locked away the mothers of cot-death babies because we suspect them of murder, yet we allow the killers of disabled children to walk free.

In the interests of all disabled children we must address this problem.

**Spencer Arnott, by email**

## Disability organisations too quick to judge

As the parent of a severely disabled child with complex needs, I wonder whether I am alone in feeling uneasy about the queue of representatives from various disability organisations lining up to criticise the judiciary over sentences for "parents who kill" *(DN, February)*.

Each case is a tragedy and whenever these cases occur I cannot help thinking "there but for the grace of God go I".

The pressures on parents are enormous and continual and there is no way of telling who will be able to cope.

Judges hear evidence about their mental state when the parents plead diminished responsibility and this is the reason for the "light" sentences, which so many have interpreted as an attack on the worth of disabled children.

The comments illustrate a lack of empathy with mental health problems as opposed to physical ones.

Instead of calling for harsher sentences for parents who have killed their children under intolerable strain (does anybody really think that harsher sentences would act as a deterrent?), I would like to see a lot more effort put into support for disabled children and their carers.

By the way, three cheers for ITV running mini slots about carers on the news recently.

**Bill Jones, by email**

## Tesco should supply easy-to-steer trolleys

It was with interest I read about the subject of supermarket trolleys last month.

My wife and I have been fighting with Tesco on a similar issue since August 2004.

She only has the use of one arm and cannot steer the trolleys for wheelchair users available at our local store.

I have tried to persuade Tesco to also supply particular wheelchair trolleys which can be pushed by a personal assistant or carer – I have seen them at Sainsbury's and Asda.

I have written to the highest level of the company, but I have not had any success.

**P Schofield, Market Harborough**

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## Comments on care inaccurate

I wonder on which era Alan Holdsworth's February comment on residential care was based? It did not reflect the experiences of myself and many disabled people I talk to.

I am not arguing the world is a rosy place but the problems faced by disabled people have shifted. Residential care still exists, but more disabled people are living in the community, often with less support than those in residential care.

I would also argue against his comment that there is abandonment of disabled people. His remarks are an insult to myself and other disabled people working for long-term change.

Like many organisations and structures, the disability movement has gone through a period of reflection and recognised it has to stop playing the same old record – Alan's article failed to portray this.

**Simon Stevens, chief executive, Enable Enterprises**

# web watch

All the latest from the Disability Now forums and Have your say pages, found at www.disabilitynow.org.uk

## DLA cut off for no good reason

**On discovering I owned a tiny holiday bungalow in the USA, the DWP stopped my Disability Living Allowance (DLA) immediately, stating that I was not "ordinarily resident in the UK" – a phrase that is not defined in the regulations. I have tried complaining to my MP but she is busy trying to get re-elected. None of the solicitors, law centres and disability advisors have been interested, and most do not even bother to reply. How can I get justice?**
**Stuart**

I totally disagree with the DWP. There is nothing to stop you owning a property abroad and using it for up to 28 weeks and still qualify for DLA. In fact, if you were awarded DLA before 1992, in certain circumstances, you can move abroad and still claim that country's equivalent. The USA has reciprocal agreements with the UK for benefits like DLA. You have the right to appeal to an independent tribunal, all of whom are appointed by the Lord Chancellor.
**Jim, retired specialist in Disability & Social Welfare Law**

I think you need to go to your Citizen Advice Bureau and get them to fight to get your DLA back. If you have to apply all over again they can help you fill out the forms. They may give you less money when you go back on DLA, if this happens find a doctor who deals with DLA and when they see that you need more money they can help you appeal. I hope you get your DLA back as you are entitled to it. And, when you get it back, make sure they back pay you.
**erica**

## Which aids work for you?

**My nan had Parkinsons for 26 years, my father owns a disabled adaptations and installations company and I have rhuematic problems and Sheuermann's. This means I have grown up surrounded by disability aids and so-called solutions, and I am disappointed at the aids available. I would love to know your views, opinions and feelings about the so-called aids we have on the market today, be it good or bad?**
**Miss T**

The thing I have been trying really hard to build for myself is some kind of gadget which can protect my kneecaps. The surfaces of both my knees are covered in open wounds caused by calcinosis, and any physical contact there can be agonising (sometimes even wearing tights over my bandages is too painful). Ordinary sports knee pads are no good because they redistribute pressure around the kneecap rather that transferring it elsewhere.
**Jennie Kermode**

I have the biggest problem keeping things still on the worktop while I undo them, like bottles and packets. Another thing is keeping the loaf of bread still while I get a slice off it, then keeping the slice still while I spread it with jam. An inventor friend put together a board with edges for me, but it's a pain to clean. Picking up things which have fallen to the floor is another nightmare. I have a grabber, but it is not strong enough to pick up anything heavy or substantial.
**dogposhpaws**

I would love something to make removing electric plugs from sockets easier. I would also like something to prop up a book at the correct height for me to read comfortably without the weight. I use a beanbagged laptray but it hurts my stomach. It would also be helpful to fit scooters with walking stick holders I cannot take my stick unless I tuck it under my arm.
**Gee**

**Have your say and join others chatting at www.disabilitynow.org.uk**

## backchat

● The Tories are making a big play of their new seven-point "disability agenda".

Under David Cameron, they have pledged to place disability at the heart of a wide-ranging policy review.

Even more shocking, a party spokesman told *Backchat* that one of the members of one of the six new policy groups is…a disabled person!

Intrigued, *Backchat* asked who this person might be. Unfortunately, their name is being kept secret.

All tip-offs or scurrilous rumours as to their identity will be gratefully received.

● On the other side of the political fence, Gordon Brown has a chance to curry favour as *DN* searches for the UK's most influential disabled people.

His former side-kick Ed Balls is championing a new bill to secure better services for disabled children and has promised to lobby his ex-boss.

A golden opportunity for our Iron Chancellor to prove how influential he is and make life easier for disabled children and their families.


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# Paralympic dream come true

He may be in his 20s, but Giles Long's success at Paralympic swimming has already earned him an MBE. Elizabeth Choppin finds out why he has achieved so much so young

ELIZABETH CHOPPIN

**WHO IS HE?**

Giles Long, 29, was born in East London and raised in Braintree, Essex. He studied geology at the University of Leeds and lives in London with his girlfriend Lynn. He competes in the S8 level of swimming and his main event is the 100m butterfly. He is currently writing an autobiography. In his free time, Giles enjoys sailing and surfing. His idea of heaven is London with a beach. Learn more about him at www.gileslong.com

Competing at the highest level of international sport requires talent, dedication and desire - and Giles Long has got all of those in spades.

As the holder of three gold, two silver and two bronze Paralympic swimming medals, plus a collection of world championship honours and record racing times, it is no wonder he was invited to Buckingham Palace in February to collect an MBE from the Queen.

He thinks his success owes as much to his mind as his muscle.

"When it comes to racing, it's more of a mental thing," Giles says. "By the time you are on the blocks, everyone is as talented as everyone else and everyone wants it as much as everyone else, but then it is who wants it that little bit more? It is a meeting of the mind and body."

And he has had plenty of time to exercise his mind in his role as adviser for London's successful bid for the 2012 Paralympics, working for charities and as a motivational speaker for corporations such as Visa, Goldman Sachs and JP Morgan.

Despite his many skills and sporting achievements, Giles says he is not your typical success story; it took a while before getting into the spirit of disabled people's sport.

Dreams of being an Olympic swimmer began when he joined his first swimming club in Essex at the age of seven.

But after a bone tumour was found in his right upper arm at the age of 13, resulting in chemotherapy treatment and several operations, he was told he would never have the same motion in his arm and would not be competing in the Olympics.

Giles says: "I asked the doctor 'What do you mean?' because obviously, if you are swimming and planning on a gold medal, this is a nightmare."

He carried on swimming, despite getting "thrashed" in competitions.

When he was 17, a member of the British Paralympic team invited him to a training meeting to find out what it was all about.

"I arrived at the hotel and the whole room was filled with disabled people. That was the first time I realised I had a disability," he says.

On the way home from the meeting, he thought to himself: "I don't want to be any part of this. This is not me. I do not want to have a disability."

For a short while he carried on as before, in denial, until, he says, a coach's comment changed his life.

He quotes: "Before you were ill you could do 10,000 things. Now you can do 9,000 things. So you have a choice – you can focus on the 1,000 things you cannot do anymore, or you can focus on the 9,000 you can still do."

Giles adds: "I realised going to the Paralympics fulfilled the same dream as going to the Olympics, and that is what got me back on course."

He started intensive training and went to his first international event in France in 1993. Eighteen months later, he won the world championships in Malta and carried on to win medals in the Atlanta, Sydney and Athens Paralympics.

Now in his late 20s, Giles shows no signs of slowing down and is looking forward to the London Paralympics.

He hopes the games will continue their rise in profile.

The BBC broadcast only two half-hour programmes after the Atlanta Games, progressing to a round-up programme each night in Sydney, and full coverage in Athens.

**'I realised going to the Paralympics fulfilled the same dream as going to the Olympics'**

In the UK, he believes most people view the Paralympics on a par with the Olympics and tries to inform those who do not.

"I do as many metres a week as (Olympic champion swimmer) Peter Van Der Hoogenband," he points out.

But for those who persistently ignore the Paralympics, particularly non-disabled sports people, he has strong words.

"It has become a real yardstick to judge someone's intelligence. The people on the Olympic team who do not value it, by and large, have quite a low IQ."

So does his frank attitude mean he would consider turning his mind to explicit campaigning for the rights of disabled people?

"I'm part of the disability movement with a small d," he admits hesitantly, adding he has always avoided the "hardened, almost militant aspect of disability".

Giles says: "I see myself as a role model to fellow sports people first, regardless of disability. But it gets to the point where you can only do so much – there is only so much time in the week."

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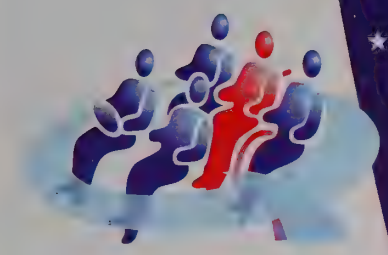
# Space Travel



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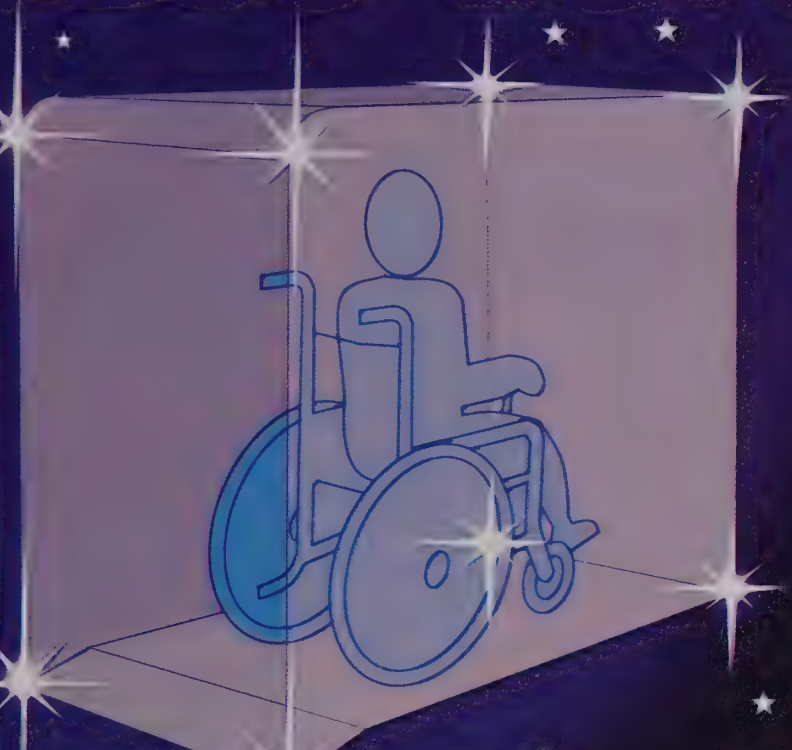

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# Tasteful Thailand

Katie Clarke wanted an overseas adventurous holiday, which would suit her disabled daughter and the six other members of her family. She was delighted to discover a Thai company that provided the complete cultural experience

Sleepy Nadia relaxes with a Thai massage on the beach

I began planning our Christmas holiday six months in advance, which was actually leaving it a bit late.

With six children from the ages of 14 to twins of six, including Nadia, my 13-year-old daughter who uses a wheelchair and communication aid, holidays take some organising.

So, when I got on the Internet one night and searched for "disabled friendly family adventure holidays" I was surprised and relieved to come across a website called Adventure Holidays Thailand*.

The excellent website encouraged me to contact them direct as the company appeared to do the impossible by enabling disabled people to access a real adventure holiday in a hot climate. Over the following months we had lots of contact via e-mail and phone calls with Tom, the director, and worked out a 16-day itinerary, which included three meals a day including Christmas and New Year gala dinners, four or five star accommodation, an English-speaking guide and a wheelchair-accessible van with a driver. All our trips and entrance fees to museums, temples and palaces were included.

We left Manchester for Bangkok with Turkish airlines on 16 December. Each time we fly I acquire more grey hairs worrying about Nadia's electric wheelchair on the flights. Although it has never actually broken during a flight, it is often returned to us in bits with the battery unattached and the seating a little more insecure than previously. However, all seemed fine when we collected wheelchairs and luggage on our arrival in Bangkok. Tom met us at the airport with his team and drove us in the large accessible vehicle to our first hotel.

Golden Palace in Bangkok

I cannot praise highly enough the organisation of the trip, the friendliness and the helpfulness of Tom's team and the fact that no request from us proved a problem.

During the two and a half weeks we experienced Thai food from street markets to gourmet cuisine, often with Thai dancing and entertainment. We never had to think about access issues when we went out or if the hotels would be disabled friendly as it was all brilliantly planned and organised. Even the hotels had been booked so that we could have three rooms next to each other, with some having connecting rooms. Where we did come across steps it was not a problem as there were always people around to lift the wheelchair and Nadia was included in all the activities.

The highlights of our trip included the Golden Palace in Bangkok and a buffet dinner river cruise as well as strolling the night bazaar in Chang Mai with our local guide Claudio and eating in his Italian restaurant, which is run by disabled people. On more adventurous days we took a train ride on the "death railway", a speedboat ride on the River Kwai and another fabulous boat trip where we swam and rode jet skis. Stroking tigers at a tiger temple sanctuary and elephant riding were also thrilling. To relax we loved the warm sea on the island of Koh Chang where we all experienced having a real Thai massage on the beautiful beach under the palm trees.

What was great too was that we were able to get to know Tom's team and their families very well, so my kids got to meet and play with Thai children.

It was the most amazing holiday we have had. The children had a fantastic cultural experience and adventure. We have some great photos and a DVD that Tom's team made that will be a wonderful memory in years to come.

* *www.adventure-holidays-thailand.com*


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## My "holiday hell"

I would like to warn readers about a distressing trip my friend Anita and I took last summer with P&O Cruises.

After a lovely cruise on the Adonia to the Mediterranean the year before, we booked a P&O voyage around the Baltic states. As a full-time wheelchair user, I was told the "new" Artemis was accessible and I would be able to go on trips.

But it was the holiday from hell. The ship was not new, but refurbished. The gangway had a step and there were runners in the corridor by our room, which only Anita could help me negotiate. One of the two small lifts there was out of order, and many doorways had raised metal runners. Our room was accessible, but the air conditioning and TV barely worked.

Then there were the excursions, or lack of them. It took a week of daily attempts to get off the ship as there was stepped access and I had to be carried off. In Riga, we got off to find there was no accessible transport. In St Petersburg, there was a bus, but the driver failed to restrain my chair; it was a very uncomfortable ride and our stop at Peterhof Palace was quite inaccessible.

Throughout the trip staff had little awareness of the needs of disabled people even though there were several on board. Anita had to stay with me because the ship was inaccessible.

Once we got back, at first only my money was to be refunded. Eventually, we were told Anita would get her money back. Considering the distress, and my physical pain from being carried, we should have received compensation.

That said, we took another trip with P&O last October to the Caribbean on the Oceana. People said we were silly to go, but we were assured the voyage would be fine. We had a fantastic time; the ship and trips were accessible and staff were very helpful.

**Natalie Holder**

*P&O Cruises says 95 per cent of its ships are accessible, including the Oceana, Oriana, Arcadia and the Aurora. They will try to make excursions accessible where possible though some may not be for full-time wheelchair users. All disabled passengers should contact P&O to discuss their needs. Tel: 08453 555 333, www.pocruises.co.uk*

# Easy cruising

If cruising seems like an exciting option for your summer holiday but you have no idea where to look, William Coombs says let the specialists do the searching for you

My wife Shirley and I have enjoyed many holidays over the years and we have visited many interesting and varied places including the USA, Germany and France.

Shirley uses a wheelchair and planning a holiday without all of the relevant details to hand can make the difference between a good holiday and a complete struggle.

As cruising was becoming more and more popular we decided to give it a go. But after visiting a high street travel agent we decided we were going to need the services of a company that specialises in booking cruises for disabled people. This proved to be a good move as we were able to ask lots of questions and Lisa, our cruise specialist, took care of all details

before we travelled so there were no unpleasant surprises once we arrived on board.

Lisa made the booking for a seven-night Iberian cruise on the Oriana, and took care of all necessary arrangements. Ports of call included Vigo in Spain, Lisbon in Portugal and La Rochelle and Brest in France.

Once our booking was confirmed we were able to check where our cabin was located on the ship's website so we could familiarise ourselves with the layout before we travelled.

On arrival at Southampton, check-in was easy. The staff were very well organised, knew exactly where we needed to go and made the offer of any assistance if we needed it.

Our accommodation was an outside cabin adapted for wheelchair use. The size was ample with plenty of space to manoeuvre and wide doorways for good accessibility. The bathroom had a roll-in shower, lowered vanity unit and grip bars.

We were provided with a comprehensive map of the ship showing all decks and the facilities available, so with the help of the lifts and the wide-open spaces it was easy to get around. The staff were exceptional and always ready to lend a hand. There were plenty of activities on board both during the daytime and in the evening that we enjoyed. Our favourites were excellent shows in the main theatre every night, where there was a balcony area for wheelchair users with seats for carers alongside. Afterwards we went to one of the many bars for a nightcap whilst listening to a pianist before retiring.

Dining options onboard are varied with plenty of formal and informal restaurants to choose from. We dined in most of the restaurants – each had its own specialty but mainly we used our designated one. We also found the self service was a nice change and room service was available at no extra cost.

Going ashore was well organised and very enjoyable. As my wife was unable to board a coach, Lisa had offered to arrange excursions utilising accessible transport before we travelled. However, we decided to explore independently and thoroughly enjoyed ourselves, taking in some beautiful sights.

There is no doubt that this cruise was the most suitable holiday we have taken to date with regard to accessibility and our requirements. However, without the help of a company experienced in arranging holidays for disabled people the outcome could have been quite different.

Unfortunately, the only thing that could not be arranged before we left was a request for great weather. Sadly, the sun did not shine on us every day, but it was October and the weather did not detract from a wonderful cruise experience.

** The Coombs' holiday was booked through Cruising Holiday, which arranges trips for many disabled people, including wheelchair users, people with sensory impairments and people requiring oxygen, haemodialysis or CAPD. Tel: 0844 484 2770, www.cruisingholiday.co.uk*


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Email: holidays.with.help@lineone.net



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Accommodating access: Red Barn gave the Roberts family *(right)* a relaxing but luxurious holiday, which offered wonderful service and care when needed

# Comfort with a splash of luxury

## Combining fun and luxury while catering for access needs, Red Barn provided the perfect holiday, writes Sarah Roberts

Our task for summer 2005 was to find a holiday location that had an attractive setting, was comfortable but luxurious, could accommodate up to six of us and was wheelchair friendly as my father has multiple sclerosis.

Often we have to compromise, but when we came across the Red Barn in Rookley in the Isle of Wight we realised we had struck gold.

Red Barn is situated on the outskirts of Rookley village and is reached via a farm track, half a mile from the road.

Views from the Red Barn are truly breathtaking; the only interruptions are braying donkeys or cockerels crowing.

This beautiful and peaceful location is situated only ten minutes' drive from Newport, which houses a number of shops, bars, restaurants and other tourist attractions.

The Red Barn offers a large living space with a high, vaulted beam ceiling. French windows lead onto a decked terrace and lawn overlooking the fields which are home to donkeys and sheep.

The decking is beautifully designed and is complimented by a bright and blooming garden. It provides a fabulous setting on which to make use of the BBQ facilities.

The main accommodation is all on the ground floor with an additional mezzanine level which can be used as an additional bedroom, children's play area or relaxation area.

There is a large dining room, and a spacious kitchen which includes hobs, oven, microwave, fridge/freezer, dishwasher and washing machine.

The living space comes with all the mod cons including DVD and CD player as well as a large screen TV with Sky.

The master bedroom has an ensuite bathroom which has been built in the style of a wet room with shower, washbasin and toilet. A fully adjustable hydraulic bed is also available.

French windows lead from the main bedroom onto the terrace and garden.

A second bedroom can be arranged with either one double or two single beds and full-length French windows leading onto the terrace and garden.

There are a host of other practical facilities which can make a visit easier if required – facilities include ramps, handrails, an induction loop and a carefully chosen colour scheme to assist those with impaired sight.

There is also back up available from physiotherapists and nursing staff, as well as a whole range of other disability equipment which can be organised for your stay.

We spent a wonderful week at Red Barn and can wholly recommend it. It has been developed with the kind of care and consideration that can only come from the heart. We were wonderfully looked after.

It was not just the care which had been put into the development of Red Barn but the extra little touches – like the fresh eggs which were delivered first thing in the morning, the collection of leaflets detailing things to do in the area and the menus for the local restaurants which helped you to decide what culinary experiences you were going to choose that night.

** Tel: 01983 721 445, www.redbarnrookley.co.uk*

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The National Trust welcomes visitors with disabilities to its historic buildings, gardens, countryside and coast in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

(NTPL/Ian Shaw)

For our free information book, *Access Guide 2006*, giving access details please contact: The National Trust Membership Dept. PO Box 39, Warrington WA5 7WD. Tel 0870 458 4000, or e-mail enquiries@thenationaltrust.org.uk

For information on Admit One Cards or Links Passes as detailed in this book please call 0870 600 5125

www.nationaltrust.org.uk

# Fitted for the perfect holiday

## Tony Wyer and his family enjoy accessible seaside chalets

I am a part-time wheelchair user, and my granddaughter Lucy is a full-time wheelchair user. So, rather than organise trips abroad, we prefer to holiday at home.

We like caravans, but have had many bad experiences, such as ramps which are at a 45 degree angle with no handrails or units lacking power points to charge electric wheelchairs.

That is why I was delighted to discover the owner of chalet homes in Hemsby, Duncan Foley who wanted to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act. I worked with him on a redesign of one of the chalets and he has made improvements to the others.

Access in the redesigned

chalet is great - there is an easy-to-use ramp to the well-proportioned living room, a kitchen and bathroom with accessible features and two bedrooms with similar features, such as low light switches.

The other chalets can have ramped access, but the bathrooms are inaccessible to wheelchairs. There are no hoists, so you may need a PA or carer, but Duncan has done a great job with the space he had to work with.

This is great, value-for-money accommodation. The only problem is that the chalets are so popular it is best to book before Christmas for the following year.

Hemsby is near Great Yarmouth and has a lively parade of amusement arcades, restaurants and clubs. These are all away from the chalets so you are not disturbed.

The beach is accessible for wheelchair users via a boarded walkway to a seating area half-way down the beach and there is lots of soft sand to play in.

** Tel: 01493 730 238, www.duncanfoleyholidays.com*

- *Prices, depending on season: £105 to £230 for two people, £110 to £245 for three and £120 to £255 for four.*

If you have an interesting holiday this year, we might publish your review in 2007. Take photos of yourself and where you visit and keep a diary of your likes and dislikes, detailing access, hotels, attractions, food, transport, prices and travel companies. On your return, send a brief summary and photos and we may be in touch at the end of the year. *E-mail: editor@disabilitynow.org.uk or write to the usual address.*

# Access holiday cash

## Need a break but can't afford to pay for it? Judy Gillespie tells you who else can

If the gloomy winter days have seemed even gloomier because you cannot afford to book a holiday, it may not be too late to get help with financing. Government grants and charitable funds are available, particularly for families on benefits, but it is up to you to get searching.

Before packing your bags, get down to social services. Most funding bodies will need a referral from a social worker or GP. With the law on your side – section four of the 1986 Disabled Persons Act and section two of the 1970 Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act, which give disabled people the right to be assessed for such services – their okay could be key to summer sun this August. If the assessment shows the need for a holiday, the local authority should assist.

That is the theory, but the reality may not be so straightforward, according to John Stanford of RADAR. "It is not specific about how a person is assessed. It is not black or white whether people should have a holiday or not," he says. And each local authority has its own system. "Some provide grants towards holiday costs,

© TOURISM AUTHORITY OF THAILAND

while others may offer holidays at places of their own choice. Some insist on means-testing and, even when grants are available, they are small," Mr Stanford says. It may be necessary to apply to several trusts or funds as some will not be able to meet the full cost.

Sources of funding are mostly ad hoc, too, according to a spokeswoman for Contact a Family, which can direct people to where to get help with holiday cash. "We have a list of charities, and some do give grants for holidays, but they have very specific criteria. From our experience people really have to plough through the list," she adds.

Funding organisations receive many applications, so plan your getaway in advance. Try local funding, including Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB) who may link you up with local charities. Rotary Clubs, Round Tables and Lions Associations are all known for generosity.

One national source of funding is the Family Fund open to low-income families caring for severely disabled or seriously ill children aged 15 and under.

The Pearson's Holiday Fund also focuses on the family, donating up to £75 per child for a UK holiday. Applications must come from a third-party referral. While Pearson's helped 505 children last year, funds are limited.

Another national source of funding is the Family Holiday Association, a charity that helps around 1,000 families a year through grants averaging £400 for British seaside holidays. The FHA assists low-income families who have not been on holiday for four years. "One family in three in the UK can't afford to take one week away from home," director John McDonald says. "We think it is extremely important for a family's well-being to have a holiday."

## Where to get help

**CAB**, *tel: 020 7833 2181, www.citizensadvice.org.uk*

**Contact a Family**, *tel: 0808 808 3555, www.cafamily.org.uk*

**Family Fund**, *tel: 0845 130 4542, www.familyfund.org.uk*

**Family Holiday Association**, *tel: 020 7436 3304, www.fhaonline.org.uk*

**Lions Club International**, *tel: 0121 441 4544, www.lions.org.uk*

**National Association of Round Table**, *tel: 0121 456 4402, www.roundtable.co.uk*

**Pearson's Holiday Fund**, *tel: 020 8657 3053, www.pearsonsholiday fund.org*

**RADAR**, *tel: 0207 250 3222, www.radar.org.uk*

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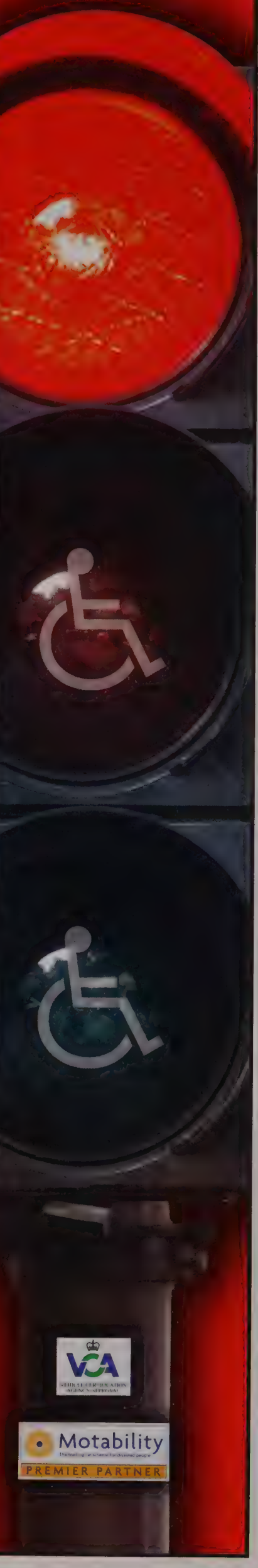

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# A world of opportunity

By tailoring holidays for the needs of disabled people, Andy Wright has made the world accessible to holidaymakers fed up with the "medical approach" to travel

I have always said that no-one understands the needs of disabled people better than disabled people themselves. This is never more true than when it comes to booking holidays.

As a disabled holidaymaker, you often hand over control of your life to people who are not knowledgeable about your needs. The results are predictable; doorways are too narrow for your wheelchair and you are not told about steps or flights of stairs.

I am not surprised that many disabled people choose to stay at home rather than go on holiday.

So, in 1997, two friends and myself set up a travel firm that would provide truly accessible holidays. I had been a tour operator with a large travel firm before becoming disabled so I believed I had all the qualifications necessary. Accessible Travel & Leisure was an obvious choice for the name.

Back in 1997 there was little on offer for the holidaymaker who used a wheelchair, and what little there was tended to be based on a medical approach.

Travel would typically be by ambulance or hospital transport and, rather than tour representatives, there would be medical staff on standby.

It was not exactly a relaxing or fun break - more like a hospital visit than a holiday.

I started to think how I could I rid a disabled person's holiday of all this excess medical baggage.

Much of it was common sense – accepting disability rather than being afraid of it - and asking disabled people what they could do rather than asking other people. But very quickly I realised a more fundamental change was needed.

The traditional approach to selling package holidays is to combine a number of things together. The package typically includes transport, accommodation, catering, entertainment and car hire.

A successful holiday happens when all these things run smoothly, and it tends to work best when all the customers have similar needs.

But holidays for disabled people have to be organised differently. Everyone's needs are unique, so little can be packaged together.

Nine years after starting the business we have taken this "individual approach" to its logical conclusion.

We don't group hotels and other facilities together into those suitable for people with certain types of impairments, rather we find accommodation and other facilities, providing information and an honest appraisal of what's on offer.

We let customers make their own judgements about what is suitable for them, based on their understanding of their own needs. It is more expensive, but if paying more buys you a happy holiday then it is money well spent.

Currently, we are working on packages to Egypt. It can be a daunting destination because it is a developing country and has its limitations, but we have a fantastic agent there who understands the mobility and access needs of disabled people.

He has a medical background and experience in a family travel agency, which makes it possible for disabled travellers to see the pyramids and cruise down the Nile.

Because it is only five hours from the UK, and has that wow factor, I would recommend it as a destination.

Personally, I enjoy holidaying in Majorca with my family, because they can get as much enjoyment out of it as I can.

**'We let customers make their own judgements about what is suitable for them based on their understanding of their own needs'**

In October last year, we organised our first ever accessible holiday show at Stoke Mandeville Stadium.

Over 40 exhibitors showed off holidays including adapted apartments, accessible cruises and equipment rental. Hundreds of visitors attended.

It made me really proud that three disabled men had organised a show for disabled people. Like I said, no one understands the needs of disabled people better than disabled people themselves.

** Accessible Travel & Leisure, tel: 01452 729 739, www.accessibletravel.co.uk*

## TEEN SPIRIT

### NANCY MAGUIRE

Speaking out for those who cannot speak for themselves

In January I travelled to New York to address the United Nations (UN) "big people" who are currently writing the convention on the rights of disabled people.

I'm 19 and have brittle bones, which means I have used a wheelchair most of my life. As a young adult, I realise how critical your childhood years are, particularly if you have a disability.

I am lucky that my parents gave me the confidence to fight through mainstream education, but my childhood was not easy.

I had many fractures and missed a lot of school, but I made it through and achieved my A-levels. I am currently working and travelling before going to university in September.

It upsets me to think how different my life could have been without the opportunities I had, so I spoke to the UN on behalf of disabled children and adolescents, alongside just five other young people from the UK, Bangladesh and China.

Hopefully one day, with the UN directive in place, consultation will involve more than a handful of people representing millions of peers.

Issues we were fighting for included an end to segregated institutions, access to information about our rights and any medical procedures we have and more consultation regarding issues affecting us.

It was interesting to discover that, although the six of us came from different cultures, the problems affecting us were similar.

Disabled children must be protected, but they should also be empowered to live interesting and successful lives.

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## Film

### Proof

*Proof*, directed by John Madden, is an adaptation of an award-winning Broadway play about troubled mathematical prodigy Catherine (Gwyneth Paltrow), who has spent ten years looking after her father Robert (Anthony Hopkins), a mathematical genius with mental health problems. After his death, she tries to come to terms with his effect on her life.

Into this gloom comes one of Robert's students, Hal (Jake Gyllenhaal) who tries to find out if her father had any undiscovered formulae, while becoming close to Catherine.

Meanwhile, to sort out family affairs, her long-departed sister Clare (played by a prim Hope Davis) returns to sell the family home and take her back to New York.

The title refers to both uncovering a mathematical proof and proving people's motives. Does Hal fall for Catherine just to gain access to her papers? Has Clare returned to put the depressed Catherine in an institution?

It could be very interesting but the film is too turgid. Clare is portrayed as a manipulative control freak and the normally excellent Gyllenhaal is unconvincing.

The plot moves between the present and the past, and trots out the notion that madness and genius are interlinked, but this concept is not developed.

The only signs of mental illness Robert displays are when he is working in the garden midwinter and hamming it up outrageously.

The only noticeable disability is the limping plot.

The saving grace is Gwyneth Paltrow, who gives a warm and tender performance, which makes Catherine's fear and isolation seem authentic.

All round, *Proof* was unconvincing and quite flat.

**Michael Shamash**

## Arts news

Actress Julie Fernandez, who featured in the BBC's hit comedy *The Office*, is spending several weeks in Los Angeles in the hope of securing a part in a US TV show.

Ms Fernandez is basing herself in the US because she has struggled to find work in the UK.

She says: "They are much more open to having people with disabilities in mainstream programmes in America.

"There are just no opportunities anymore for disabled artists. We are only chosen if they cannot find an able-bodied actor they want to put in the part of a disabled character."

She praises BBC3's decision to commission six episodes of *I'm With Stupid*, starring disabled actor Paul Henshall.

But the actress and campaigner says: "That is

fantastic, but it will be 'we have done it once and that's all we need to do.' Where are the disabled newsreaders or weathergirls or TV presenters?

"I have had enough. I need to earn a living and I cannot earn a living in this country."

**John Pring**

## TV

BBC2's *Alternative Medicine* explored acupuncture, healing and herbs in a fascinating three-part series last month.

Presented by the delightful Professor Kathy Sykes, the show's bottom line seemed to be "do not knock it until you have tried it".

Science could not explain why a Chinese woman was able to undergo open heart surgery with no general anaesthetic after having just a few acupuncture needles inserted.

She chatted happily to the surgical team throughout the procedure and suffered no discomfort whatsoever.

In the second instalment surgeons conducting a trial in America found that even sham operations worked because patients who believed they had had surgery actually felt better.

It really was extraordinary stuff to watch.

The third episode explored the amazing healing power of certain herbs – a fact which still seems to confound the scientific community.

Perhaps the programme should have been called complementary medicine as methods like acupuncture, and herbs are only tools, and not supposed to replace orthodox medicine.

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder reared its head again with Steve *The League of Gentlemen* Pemberton appearing in an episode of BBC1's *Hotel Babylon*.

Long-term guest Mr Daniels caused chaos with his behaviour in this slick drama alongside hunky assistant general manager Charlie, played by Max Beesley.

C4 continued its *Bodyshock* series with another distressing documentary about progeria – a rare disease that causes the body to age prematurely. I did not need to watch it, the title – *The 80-Year-Old Children* – told me everything I needed to know.

By the way, I have heard on the grapevine that Ben Mitchell, who is deaf, is returning to BBC1's *EastEnders*. Watch out for it.

**Jane Shepherd**

**• To find out what's on this month visit: *www.disabilitynow.org.uk***

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## Books

**White on Black**
Ruben Gallego
John Murray, £10

Ruben Gallego's *White on Black* is an international bestseller, has been translated into 20 languages, and is the winner of the 2003 Russian Booker Prize.

Born in Moscow in 1968 with cerebral palsy, Gallego was banished to a state orphanage by his grandfather, the exiled leader of Spain's Communist Party, who told Ruben's mother that her one-year-old son had died.

Gallego's style is partly the product of his tortuous method of composition – typing with one finger of his left hand.

However, his ironic understatement of the horrors of state-sponsored genocide also echoes the experiences of author and holocaust survivor Primo Levi.

Matter-of-factly he states: "I'm a hero. It's easy to be a hero. If you don't have hands or feet, you're either a hero or dead."

Gallego's black humour is constant in his story. After a gruelling description of crawling to the toilet in sub-zero temperatures, he writes: "In the morning they dress me and take me to school. In history class I cheerfully recount the horrors of the Fascist concentration camps. I get the top mark."

Despite the casual brutalities of the orphanages, the neglect and the pointlessness of everyday existence, Gallego shows his love of the world in "a bite of lard, a salami sandwich, a handful of figs, a blue sky, a couple of books, and a kind word".

This love in the midst of horror puts all of our lives in perspective and is a magnificent testament to the enduring strength of the human spirit.

**Alex White**

## Audio books

Inevitably the success of any audiobook depends on the skill of the reader as much as the author's literary talent, and one of the most gifted masters of narration has to be the actor Anton Lesser.

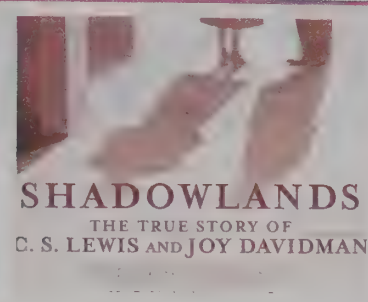
His recordings are prolific, and thanks to him two very recent Harper Collins publications, Ian McEwan's *The Child in Time* and *The Innocent (both £15.99)* are a fabulous listen.

As co-reader of Kate Mosse's *Labyrinth (Orion, £16.99)*, he is equally superb, and along with another tried and tested voice of the spoken word market, Emilia Fox, this particular title is one of the most absorbing audiobooks I have enjoyed for some time.

In this compelling adventure story, the writer cleverly intertwines the lives of two women who, although separated by eight centuries, are nevertheless linked by a common destiny.

The device of two narrators is also used to maximum effect in the production of the latest offering from the ever popular Nicci French. Read by Elizabeth Dermot Walsh and Kate Sachs, *Catch Me When I Fall (Penguin, £12.99)* follows the emotional rollercoaster life of Holly Krauss.

This powerful novel centres on whether or not the heroine's own fears for her well-being are a result of mental illness or an all too real danger.




For fans of C S Lewis' Narnia books, brought to life at Christmas in the hit movie *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Brian Sibley's *Shadowlands* is a must *(Harper Collins, £13.99)*. Read by the inimitable Joss Ackland, this is the poignant story of the life of Lewis and his tragically brief marriage Joy Gresham.

Finally, for something a little different, and featuring many of our best- loved British actors, including Laurence Olivier and Judi Dench, the British Library, in association with the Royal Shakespeare Company, has just produced *The Essential Shakespeare- Live (£15.95)*.

This is a unique compilation featuring recorded extracts from the past 40 years of RSC productions.

**Vidar Hjardeng**

## Book news

- *The Sound of Us* by Sarah Willis is a story about Alice Marlowe, a sign language interpreter and a six-year-old girl she fosters. *Piatkus, £6.99*

- Ray Robinson's *Electricity* centres on Lily, who has epilepsy, as she is drawn into her family's past after her mother's death. *Picador, pub. 17 March, £12.99*

- In *Relative Stranger* Mary Loudon explores the lost life of her sister, who had schizophrenia. *Canongate, £16.99*

- *I Can't Walk But I Can Crawl: A Long Life with Cerebral Palsy*, by Joan Ross, is an autobiographical account published in association with Scope. *£17.99. Tel: 020 7324 8500, www.sagepublications.com*

- *Strength: Broadsides from Disability on the Arts* by Paddy Masefield is an illustrated anthology of disability arts. *Trentham Books, £17.99. Tel: 01782 745 567, www.trentham-books.co.uk*


# Chartwell Insurance 40 years of service

Chartwell insurance is the longest established specialist insurance provider. First founded in 1965 they have been a market leader for over 40 years.

They are a family run business with high service standards and caring experienced staff who believe in providing quality products at affordable prices.

They have developed their own **"Freedom"** range of policies together with major insurers which are available to Blue Badge holders for car policies and for Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle owners.

Their **Freedom Motor Policy** includes protection for any driving adaptations that may be fitted to your vehicle, and travel costs can be allowed if the courtesy vehicle provided in the event of an accident is unsuitable for your needs. With unlimited drivers over 25, carers can be added with ease and often there is no need to complete any forms.

They can also transfer Motability driving experience into actual bonus (which if you have four or more years claims free experience can be protected).

The driving age for new business is from 16 up to 80 (No age limit applies for owners who do not drive).

Travel insurance has been made easy with a simple medical declaration and no proposal form to complete. Most pre - existing medical conditions are fully covered this is available by a free phone call where instant cover can be issued at very reasonable prices.

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They provide insurance for most Powerchairs, Scooters, & Trikes for full accidental damage and theft cover with your own personal liability protected up to £2million.

Chartwell has a new service available for **Breakdown & Recovery** for both, motor vehicles (up to 3.5 tonnes) and all mobility equipment.

There is no age limit for any vehicle and there are no limitations or penalties for the amount of times you use the service during your policy period.

For motor vehicles up to 3.5 tonnes home start and roadside assistance is part of the standard package. With a 24 hour 365 days a year dedicated rapid response service for immediate dispatch of a rescue vehicle which will be a seven seat recovery vehicle will be sent to ensure you and your passengers will be transported together safely in the event that the vehicle cannot be started.

For Scooters & Trikes, cover includes the 24 hour 365 days a year rapid response service who will endeavour to mobilise equipment that has stopped working. This includes battery boosting and they will attend any location away from home (if you have just got to the end of your road or you were stuck on the top floor of a shopping centre you are covered), and if your equipment cannot be fixed it will be recovered to a specialist repairer and you will be transported home.

If any of these services are of interest or you require further information why not give them a call on **0800 652 1653**
email: **info@chartwellinsurance.co.uk** or visit them at **www.chartwellinsurance.co.uk**

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# Accidents do happen

When Helen Smith was involved in a minor hit and run she never expected a fleet of fire engines and police to arrive, ready to pry her from burning wreckage. The reaction made her to consider how disabled people can prepare in case of an accident

While driving my car to work just before Christmas I was hit by a lorry. It hit me with such force that I was knocked into another lane. The driver did not stop, nor did anyone else, and I was unable to get the number plate.

I pulled to the side of the road, but I had no idea if it was safe to continue driving.

Traffic was passing too closely for me to get out safely and survey the damage, so I dialled 999 and explained that I had been hit by a lorry and could not get out of my car.

I cannot remember if I said I was disabled or not, but the next thing I knew two fire engines had arrived with a police car in tow – I presume they intended to chop me out of my car.

Needless to say, I felt like a complete idiot.

But the police were extremely nice and quickly dispatched the fire engines. They told me my doors had born the brunt of the impact and I was still able to drive to work.

That afternoon my insurance company arranged for my car to be picked up and repaired. It was returned with two new doors in just over a week.

Since the driver of the lorry did not stop, there was little the police could do, and I was left to pay my own insurance excess.

Having this accident made me consider what I would do in the future.

For one thing, I will make sure I say that I am disabled to prevent fire engines being dispatched unnecessarily.

I contacted Norfolk police for their advice on what disabled drivers should do if they are involved in an accident. The advice is the same, whether you are disabled or not.

## At the scene

The most important thing to do is check that nobody is hurt and, if they are, seek medical attention.

If you feel it is helpful for emergency services to know you are disabled then tell them.

If the accident is not serious, but you still require assistance from the police, you can ring the non-emergency number for your area*.

On a motorway it is advised that people get out of their car and up the bank, but that might not be possible if you are disabled and you should tell the police this.

According to the law, you must either stop at the scene of an accident or report it to the police within 24 hours.

If you have been hit, but do not feel safe stopping, drive on and contact the police as soon as possible.

## Insurance

I am insured by Fish Insurance** who specialise in insuring disabled drivers. I phoned them as soon as I could after my accident.

As I cannot drive a hire car with just hand controls (I have extra adaptation needs), I could claim back the cost of my taxi journeys until my car was returned.

Anyone driving a Motability car will need to contact Royal & SunAlliance Mobility*** if involved in an accident.

Motability advise their members to contact the RAC if their car cannot be driven away.

## Dos and don'ts

- Anyone who is in an accident should exchange details with the other drivers involved. Swap your name, address, phone number, vehicle registration and insurance company details.
- If there are any witnesses you should try and get their names and addresses too.
- Many insurance companies advise their members not to admit any fault, deny the claim or negotiate to pay anything without contacting them first.
- In an accident where people are injured, you might have to make a statement to the police.
- If you think the accident might have been your fault you can arrange to give a statement at a later date. You can then prepare yourself properly, and instruct a solicitor if necessary.

No one wants to have an accident, but if you know exactly what to do, it can make a horrible situation much easier.

** Find your local police number, www.met.police.uk/contacts/Phonenumbers.htm*

*** Fish Insurance, tel: 01772 724 442, www.fishinsurance.co.uk*

**** Royal & SunAlliance Mobility, tel: 0500 37 37 37*

## Update: Advanced driving test

I passed my advanced driving test in January, so I am now a fully fledged member of the Institute of Advanced Motorists (IMA).

I am really glad I saw the test through, after doing advanced driving lessons (*DN, September 2005*), it has certainly made me a better driver.

The test reduces your risk of having an accident, so you can save money on car insurance. Also, the cost is nothing like learning to drive, you only pay for the test because it is run by volunteers.

I would highly recommend it to anyone.

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# Safe ride

Specifically designed car restraints will soon be required for youngsters of all ages. Lucy Andrews outlines those with added support for disabled children.

In May the law on using child restraints in cars will change. From then, appropriate child restraints will be compulsory for children under three and also for older children (up to at least 4'5") unless none is available, such as in taxis. This means that in the majority of situations a child will no longer be able to use an adult seat belt alone in the front or back of a car.

It is safer for a child to travel in the back of the car, but there are cases when it makes sense to sit in front, such as for sign language use or for a driver to keep an eye on a child. The new law still allows children to travel in the front seat provided they are in a support seat appropriate to their size and weight.

Finding a car seat that provides the right level of support, especially for an older child, can be difficult, but there are options available. They can be expensive, but you may be able to get funding from your local NHS services or the Family Fund*.

** Tel: 0845 130 4542, www.familyfund.org.uk*

## PLAY TRAY

**What?** The Eurocare Seat is a shaped, polystyrene car seat with a tray that is fastened with Velcro. The tray may help a child's stability, obscures the harness buckle and facilitates play, distracting the child from fiddling. The seat is lightweight, only 3kg, making it easier to move from car to car. It is for children weighing nine to 25kg.

**How much?** £130

**Where?** In-Car Safety Centre, tel: 01908 220 909, www.incarsafetycentre.co.uk

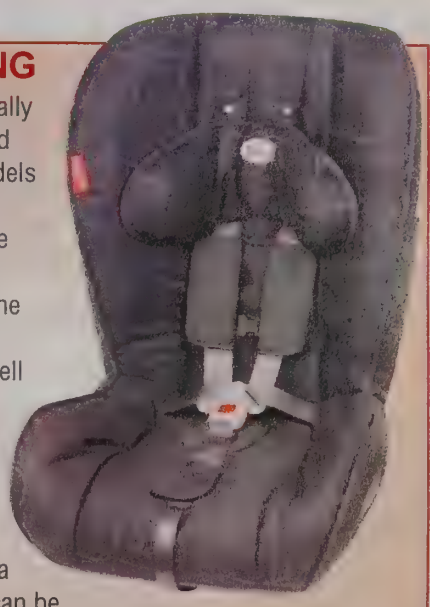
## MUSICAL CHAIR

**What?** The Recaro Start Plus is a multi-adjustable car seat that can be altered as a child grows to a maximum user weight of 36kg (approximately 12 years). The seat has a high backrest, and a head support with integral headphones and a socket to attach a tape or CD player, so a child can listen to their own choice of music or story tape. Two versions are available, with a small or large pommel. Both versions have the option of lateral supports, a footrest, a tray and a swivel base.

**How much?** From £625

**Where?** Delichon, tel: 01725 519 405, www.delichon.co.uk

## PERFECT PADDING



**What?** The Traveller is basically a larger version of a standard car seat available in two models covering the age range from nine months to 11 years. The Junior model is for children weighing nine to 25kg and the Plus model is for children weighing 15 to 36kg. The shell seat has a removable padded cover and there are additional pads that can be added to give extra support where required as well as a five-point harness, and a headrest cushion. The seat can be reclined.

**How much?** From £150 to £420

**Where?** Britax-Excelsior (via retailers), tel: 01264 333 343, www.Britax.co.uk

## LEG ROOM ALLOWANCE

**What?** The Carrot Car Seat is for children aged 3 to 12 years, roughly 15 to 36kg, with a mini-version available for a smaller child from 9kg. The high-sided seat and backrest are hinged together, allowing the backrest to adopt the same recline as the seat it is used on, and the entire seat can be tilted back further by inserting a wedge under the base. A detachable section at the front of the seat supports the legs in front, or this can be replaced by a footrest should legs need supporting in a down position. Extra support pads line the car seat, and the harness has extra padding across the chest. An optional table attaches with Velcro.

**How much?** From £623

**Where?** JCM Seating Solutions, tel: 01775 766 664, www.jcmseating.co.uk

## SWIVEL SUPPORT

**What?** The Timy Max car seat caters for older children up to 170cm tall and a maximum weight of 49kg. The seat provides side and head support and is fitted with either a four or five-point harness. The whole seat unit can be tilted back by seven degrees and has the option of a swivel base to make transferring a child into a seat easier.

**How much?** From £1,189

**Where?** DCS Joncare, tel: 01235 523 353, www.dcsjoncare.com

## GOT AN EQUIPMENT QUESTION?

Lucy Andrews is a senior advisor at the Disabled Living Foundation (DLF). If you have a question on equipment for Lucy please email editor@disabilitynow.org.uk or post it to the usual address. The DLF helpline is open Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm, and provides information and advice on choosing and using equipment. Contact the helpline on 0845 130 9177 or email: advice@dlf.org.uk

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# Time to get equal

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**Q:** What do you get when you combine Scope's disability expertise and graduate level placements with the UK's best employers?

**A:** Leadership Recruitment… every year fifty disabled people of graduate calibre can gain skills, development training and paid work experience.

Mitan (right) was a Leadership Recruitment trainee in 2005; he says that he has "a new lease of life. I successfully secured a placement with Price Waterhouse Coopers and this opportunity has given me belief that my disability is something that will not stop me from being successful."

If you think you, like Mitan, can handle a year working with the likes of HSBC, Lehman Brothers, Capital One, or the other big names you'll find on our website, apply before 17 March. We assure you the effort is worth it.

For more details go to www.diversityworks.scope.org.uk/services/recruitment.shtml. Or contact Natalie Rudd on 020 7619 7114 or natalie.rudd@scope.org.uk

## New Public Sector Duty Workshops

From December 2006 public sector organisations will be subject to new disability equality duties. Scope has introduced one-day interactive workshops about the six elements the duty covers.

The day includes information about why promoting disability equality makes good organisational sense; a discussion of the Social Model of disability; key legislative points; and, most importantly, practical solutions.

Seminars take place in London, Birmingham and Wakefield. The programme runs from March to June this year. Delegate rates are £150 (plus VAT), to include an action pack, refreshments and a light lunch.

The seminar can also be delivered to groups as a tailored in-house course. This means we come to you for one day, at a lower cost per participant.

For more information visit www.diversityworks.scope.org.uk or contact Robin Davies at robin.davies@scope.org.uk Tel: 020 7619 7725.

## Speak for Yourself Campaign

Speak for Yourself aims to ensure that people with communication impairments get the equipment, training and support they need to communicate. Without this people cannot express themselves freely, discuss ideas or make choices.

In 2000 Scope's Speak for Yourself report showed the problems many people face in getting the equipment they need to communicate. The report revealed that 47% of users' equipment was not funded through statutory sources, although the average cost was £4,100. It also showed a lack of training and repair services.

In response to the first phase of the campaign, the Communication Aids Project (CAP) was set up to provide extra funding for school-aged children in England. This comes to an end in March 2006.

Although CAP funding made a difference, it was not sufficient and many children still don't have the equipment they need. It also did not cover pre-school children, adults or apply to Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland. At the moment people are faced with a "post code lottery" as dwindling funds are administered by local government.

**We need your help!** By writing to your local Member of Parliament we can ensure that they know that this needs to change. To find out more go to: www.scope.org.uk/issues/communication.shtml

**www.timetogetequal.org.uk**

For information on the Time to Get Equal campaign
call: 020 7619 7710
or email: equality.campaign@scope.org.uk

# Council complaints

Getting services you are entitled to from your local council can be challenging. When they are not provided fighting for them can be a long and lonely experience, but Helen Reay says help is available

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Are you unhappy with how your council has treated you? Perhaps it has not dealt with your application for a disabled facilities grant properly? Maybe it has failed to take into account your circumstances when assessing a council tax claim? Or has it refused to provide you with respite care? If all this sounds familiar, have you thought about complaining to the Local Government Ombudsman?

This free, independent service investigates complaints about councils and some other authorities put forward by both individuals or advisers on their behalf. Where things have gone wrong, we aim to put them right and have helped many disabled people and their families.

We can investigate whether a council has done something wrong, failed to do something, or took too long to do something, but only if the council's action has affected you or your family directly. We can do this, for example, if you are a carer and your council has failed to assess your needs or took too long doing so, or if the council has misled you about your rights, such as stopping you applying for a benefit to which you are entitled.

What we cannot do is criticise a council's decision or action just because you disagree with it. For example, if, following proper consultation, a council decides to close all their nursing homes and provide through the private sector, we cannot question that move.

Usually, a council must have a chance to investigate your complaint first, but if the matter is urgent we might be able to investigate it straightaway.

Once you have contacted us, we will usually telephone you first to discuss your complaint. But if you would prefer us to contact you in a different way, or through a friend or adviser, we will do so. We then usually write to the council and ask for comments. Sometimes we may need to visit you and go to the council's offices to examine the files or interview the council officers involved. When we have enough information to reach a decision, we will write to you to let you know.

If we find a council has been at fault, we will try to find a way for the council to put things right or resolve the complaint fairly. We might ask the council to apologise to you, or provide the service you requested, or reconsider its decision, or pay you compensation. We may also recommend that the council improve their procedures so that similar problems do not happen again.

To complain, you should contact us in writing. You can use one of our complaint forms or simply write a letter. An adviser can send the form on your behalf if you would prefer.

We also accept complaints in Braille or on tape and, if you have difficulty writing, we can discuss the complaint over the phone and then send the details to you to check they are accurate. We can provide all correspondence and many standard documents in large print, on tape or in Braille.

We can arrange to conduct interviews by Typetalk, by Internet exchange or we can engage sign language interpreters, either in person or through video conferencing. We encourage the involvement of advisers and advocates for those who would like to be supported in making a complaint to us.

Leaflets and complaint forms are available at council offices, through advice agencies or on our website at www.lgo.org.uk. If you need to speak to us, tel: 0845 602 1983.

** Helen Reay is an investigator for the Local Government Ombudsman*

## People we have helped

**Mr and Mrs C** cared for their 20-year-old son, who had severe learning difficulties. They felt their council wrongly excluded him from one of their residential care units and failed to provide him with respite care for nearly two years. He became bored and withdrawn, while Mr and Mrs C had stress, anxiety and health problems. We found the council was at fault because they did not have adequate provision for young people with autism. The council agreed to arrange for additional care to make up for the time lost and to pay £4,000 compensation. We also recommended the council should prioritise new facilities for young people with autism.

**Mr A** complained about his social services department, which had been involved with his young son, and in particular their failure to provide a hearing loop for his wife at child protection meetings. The council failed to allow Mrs A to participate fully in the proceedings. The council acknowledged its poor service and apologised. It also agreed to install a loop system and provide training in disability issues.

**Mrs B** complained that her council failed to deal properly with her application for a grant to carry out adaptations to her bathroom to meet the needs of her disabled husband. The council did not visit Mrs B at a crucial time and assess the quality of work by a builder who left the work unfinished. Mrs B and her husband were left without a functional bathroom and toilet for a number of days. We found the council at fault for not inspecting the work when clearly there was a problem. We recommended the council pay one third of the builder's bill, who finished the work, and a further £250 for having to pursue the matter.

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# Dear Rachel

- love and loneliness
- bereavement
- personal problems
- advice and support

Rachel Wilson, who is disabled herself, has spent many years advising on disability matters. Write to her at *Disability Now*, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW or email your problem to editor@disabilitynow.org.uk

## Wheelchair worries

I have multiple sclerosis and with limited use of one arm I rely on an electric wheelchair to get around. What I should do if the chair breaks down when I am out? I do carry a mobile phone with me, but I would need to get to a place of safety.

I also travel abroad, but cannot take my hoist with me. Do you have any suggestions as to where I might obtain one for hire when travelling in Europe?

**Phil, by email**

This is something I have experienced myself and it can be a difficult issue, particularly if you cannot transfer into a conventional vehicle.

Cultivate a good relationship with a reliable local garage, who could come out to you in an emergency; if only to get you to a place of safety.

Keep the number of your nearest accessible taxi firm.

Some areas operate a dial-a-ride scheme, or similar, and it would be worth seeing if there is one local to you.

You also asked about equipment hire when you are overseas. You could try sourcing individual suppliers, local to where you are staying, but the best thing to do is contact an organisation like Holiday Care, which provides information on all aspects of disability and travel. If you tell them where you are planning to travel, they can give you more specific information.

- *Holiday Care, tel: 0845 124 9971, www.holidaycare.org.uk*

## Housing discrimination

I am having difficulty with my housing association. I have an occupational therapy report saying that I need to be rehoused because of my disability, but I think other people are being prioritised over me and I am not being listened to. I have a support worker who is helping me, but who can I talk to about this discrimination?

**Mari-Anne, Merseyside**

Since you have a support worker, it would be sensible to ask for their help in talking to the housing association directly.

Having reports from an occupational therapist and medical reports will help, but it may be that your housing association does not have a property available that meets your needs yet.

Although it may seem that other people are being prioritised over you, this may not necessarily be true - they may have circumstances that you are not aware of.

If you still think you are being discriminated against, you can try the Disability Rights Commission or the Disability Law Service and they can advise you further.

- *Disability Law Service, tel: 020 7791 9800, www.dls.org.uk*

## My pension is pitiful

I am 63 years old and, despite having worked since the age of 15, I cannot afford to stop work as my pension is only £49 per week - a sum less than the Job Seekers Allowance which feels grossly unfair.

It is low because I spent a number of years looking after my children.

I do not want to claim Pension Credit as I have never claimed anything.

**Helen, Bolton**

I strongly suggest you contact The Pension Service, who can advise you on what you might be entitled to; they may be able to suggest ways you can "make up" for the years you were not able to work.

Whilst I understand your reluctance to claim pension credit, you should seriously consider it. You would not be claiming anything that is not rightfully yours.

- *The Pension Service, tel: 0845 60 60 265, textphone: 0845 60 60 285, www.thepensionservice.gov.uk*

## Help most appreciated

Can disabled people get any extra help with money and filling out forms?

**Emily, Bristol**

There is lots of different help that disabled people can get, depending on the things they find difficult and the sort of help they need.

If you need help finding out whether you can get benefits, you can ring the Disability Information and Advice Line (DIAL). They can also help you fill out forms.

- *DIAL, tel: 01302 310 123, www.dialuk.org.uk*

# Progress at stake

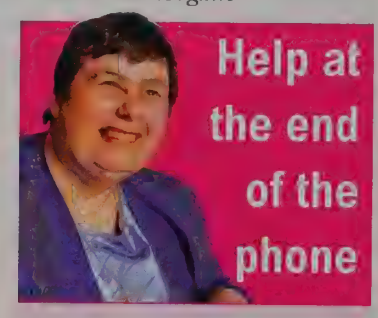
I have a problem with the Local Education Authority (LEA). My child, who is four, has cerebral palsy and has been in mainstream education since nursery. My child receives support 16 hours a week and has made steady progress. Following a review, the LEA is seeking to withdraw this support; saying my child's progress means it is unnecessary. My child's teacher and physio believe the support should continue and I am concerned about what might happen if it is withdrawn. What can I do?

**Jane, Manchester**

I am sorry to hear about the difficulties you are having. It seems ironic that the LEA have taken your child's progress as justification for its withdrawal, rather than evidence that it should continue. Nevertheless, under the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) 2001, it is unlawful for your child to be treated in a way which puts them at a disadvantage educationally. Under this Act, you would be entitled to appeal to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal, against any LEA decision to withdraw support. The authority is obliged to maintain support whilst any appeal is pending. The fact that both physiotherapists and teachers are of the view that the support needs to be maintained can only strengthen your case.

There are a number of organisations that can advise you on the best way to proceed, given your child's specific needs:

- *Children's Legal Centre Advice Line, tel: 0845 456 6811, www.childrenslegalcentre.com*
- *CSIE (Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education), tel: 0117 923 8450, http://inclusion.uwe.ac.uk*
- *Disability Rights Commission, tel: 08457 622 633, textphone: 08457 622 644, www.drc-gb.org*




*DN*'s telephone counsellor Lin Berwick gives disabled people and carers advice and support on personal and spiritual problems. Disabled herself, Lin is a psycho-therapeutic counsellor and Methodist local preacher, with a postgraduate diploma in homeopathic medicine. If you have something you need to discuss in confidence, talk to her on Mondays 6pm-10pm and Thursdays 1pm-5pm, tel: 01787 882 111.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# ASK THE READERS

**I have had problems asking staff to serve me outside at petrol stations. What techniques can I use to help persuade them and what action can I take if they will not help?**

## Preferred station

I tend to use the same petrol station in my home town. I give them a quick ring from my mobile a few minutes before I get to the garage and ask if a member of staff could assist me when I arrive on the forecourt. They have never let me down and are quite happy to fetch items from the garage shop as well. They have a mobile machine so I can pay by card without telling anyone my pin number.

Pete Gee, Yorkshire

## Make a scene

Try parking at a pump where the staff can see you. Open your window and wave your blue parking badge as high as possible, at the same time giving three hoots on the horn. I adopt this proceedure at my local Sainsbury's and it nearly always has the desired result. If this does not work, keep your hand firmly on the horn. This is bound to attract attention from other motorists, who will either assist or complain to staff about the awful racket!

David Edwards, Somerset

## Push the button

I brought a ServiceCall Transmitter, which I carry in the car. It rings a bell in the petrol station (if they subscribe to the scheme) and someone comes out to the car.

Gwen Adams, Dorset

## NEXT MONTH'S QUESTION:

**"I have severe cerebral palsy (CP) and need total care but I live life to the full. I am not against labels, but I object to assumptions that severe physical disabilities affect learning capabilities. Recently I attended a talk on coping with disability. Having had CP since birth it was not useful, but the speaker assumed I did not like it because I had learning difficulties. How can I convince people there is a distinction?"**

Send your answers and your own questions to "Ask the readers" at the usual address or email: *editor@disabilitynow.org.uk*

# SIMON SAYS

Expressing our sexuality is hard when society turns its back on sexual diversity, and prevents us being recognised as sexual people

I see many disabled and non-disabled clients who use sex workers.

Most struggle with their behaviour, feeling the need to do it and yet trying to cope with the exploitation, health risks and costs - as well as the long-term impact on their current and future relationships.

Richard wrote to me with a desperate cry for help, "I just cannot go on without some physical contact. Wanting someone for some sexual relief plays on my mind all the time," he said.

Whatever the rights and wrongs of paying for sex, it is clear that this lack of physical contact and intimacy is, at best, a major cause of sadness and, at its worst, a contributor to depression.

Sex workers provide physical relief, never emotional intimacy or love. But to Richard, in his late 20s, who has difficulty even masturbating, this distinction is somewhat academic.

Even those of us who have experienced close intimacy in a past relationship know the difficulty of living a life where the only physical touch is that of carers and health professionals.

**'Wanting someone for sexual relief plays on my mind all the time'**

I struggle to know what to say. I want to say that life is not fair because we live in a world of competing rights and responsibilities.

So I recommend Richard starts by finding ways to masturbate himself - using a sex aid if necessary.

He could start off by getting a massage to open himself to the sensual pleasures of touch - it does not have to be sexual to create the desired effect.

Those are two steps towards feeling different. But, that is not a solution. There is perhaps no perfect answer.

It is about being lucky, making the effort to be interesting to others and increasing the chances of finding a partner.

Sex workers are not the final solution - they temporarily fill the gap left when society turned its back on people's sexual diversity.

How can we change this? Perhaps by offering some kind of sexual and relationship education, but more effectively, by recognising that whilst having sex is not a right, having the opportunity to be a sexual person, is.

**Simon Parritt is a chartered counselling psychologist.**

**Send your relationship questions to "Simon says" at 6 Market Road, London, N7 9PW or email:** *editor@disabilitynow.org.uk*


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## What's On

**The NCYPE** (National Centre for Young People with Epilepsy) is holding an open day on 2 March in Lingfield, Surrey. *To book a place and find out more, tel: 01342 831 238, www.ncype.org.uk*

**PROdisCA**, which campaigns for abuse prevention, is holding a seminar titled Chairing Child Protection Conferences for Disabled Children on 2 March at NCVO in London. The seminar will address the need for protection of disabled children from abuse. £176.25. *Tel: 01428 641 425, email: info@in-trac.co.uk*

**Northumbria University** is holding a conference titled Equality in Employment at the Marriott Gosforth Park Hotel, Newcastle upon Tyne on 3 March. From £200. *Tel: 0191 243 7597, email: maureen.cooke@northumbria.ac.uk, www.northumbria.ac.uk/law/lsu/conferences*

**Aston University** in Birmingham is holding a conference titled Disability Discrimination Act 1995: Issues for Transport Professionals on 22 March. *Tel: 0121 204 3000, http://cel.conferences.aston.ac.uk*

**Kids** is holding a conference titled Changing Practice-Changing Lives, focusing on the Playwork Inclusion Project (PIP) at the Abbey Community Conference Centre, London, on 22 March. From £60. Tel: 020 7359 3073, email: fiona.cannon@kids.org.uk. Kids is also holding network meetings around the UK in March, exploring inclusive play strategy development. The meetings are open to anyone interested in including disabled children in play, childcare and leisure settings. *For dates and venues, tel: 01453 752 509, email: network.coordinator@kids.org.uk, www.kids.org.uk*

**Disability Capital 2006**, the Mayor of London's third disability equality conference, will be held at the Novotel West conference centre in Hammersmith on 23 March. The event will focus on the progress towards inclusion and accessibility in London, including the Olympics and Paralympics in 2012. Free. *Tel: 020 7983 4100, email: disabilitycapital@london.gov.uk*

**SEN Regional Partnerships: South East Region** are holding a conference on autistic spectrum disorders on 23 March at the Renaissance Hotel, Gatwick, London. £50. *Tel: 0208 541 9048, www.sersen.uk.net*

A conference titled **Human Rights: Transforming Services** will be held at the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre in London on 27 March. The event will focus on access to services. From £190. *Tel: 01920 487 672, www.profbriefings.co.uk/hrts2006*

**MAGDAH** (Multi Agency Group Against Disablist Attack and Harassment) is holding a conference on disablism in Wellingborough on 28 March. Free. *Tel: 01832 742 257, email: cpayne@east-northamptonshire.gov.uk*

## Wanted

**Communication Matters** is inviting papers for the National Symposium, to be held from 24-26 September at Leicester University. The programme will include seminars, presentations and workshops. The papers can be on any topic addressing communication needs, including assessment, implementation, using the Internet, employment, advocacy and training. Papers are welcomed from people who use AAC, family members and professionals. Deadline for abstracts: 14 April.
*Tel: 0845 456 8211, email: admin@communicationmatters.org.uk*

## Websites

**Sportability**, which provides sporting opportunities around the UK, has relaunched its website. *See www.sportability.org*

**Deaf-blogs.com** is a free service that brings together blogs by deaf people from all over the Internet. It offers support and sep-by-step guides for creating blogs. There are also videoblogs or vlogs, for sign language users. *See www.deaf-blogs.com*

**The Disabled Living Foundation** (DLF) has launched DLF digest, a free email newsletter for healthcare professionals, offering advice, information and tips, including equipment and technology. *To subscribe, see www.dlf.org.uk/dlfdigest*

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## Services

**Respond** has a helpline service for older people with learning difficulties, their families and carers. The service forms part of the Elder's project, which also offers loss and bereavement counselling, staff training and psychotherapy for people with learning difficulties. Respond has also launched a new helpline service for children and young people with learning difficulties who are experiencing problems such as bullying and abuse. *Tel: 0808 808 0700, www.respond.org.uk*

**BDF Newlife** supports families who have a child with an inborn condition (congenital abnormality) causing illness or disability. The Child and Family Grants Scheme helps families with funding, which goes towards items including motorised wheelchairs and sensory equipment. *Tel: 08700 70 70 20, www.bdfnewlife.co.uk*

**Bliss=Ability** is a disability information bureau based in South Shields, Tyne and Wear. The bureau offers advice and support, including information in various formats. *Tel/textphone: 01914 271 666, www.blissability.org*

**New Leaf**, based in Nottingham, offers a free 'floating tenancy support' service for physically disabled tenants, to help with budgeting finances, claiming benefits, finding education and employment, and social activities. *Tel/textphone: 07967 195 340, email: nathanael.goddard@newleafsi.co.uk*

**Contact a Family** has extended its freephone helpline to one evening a week, Mondays 5.30 to 7.30pm. The helpline includes advice on benefits and assessments and medical information. *Tel: 0808 808 3555, textphone: 0808 808 3556, www.cafamily.org.uk*

## Wanted

**Mencap** is looking for entrants for the *Snap!* photo competition 2006. There are various categories and the entered photos should be by or of a person with learning difficulties. Prizes include cameras and cash, and winning entries will be displayed at the Victoria & Albert Museum, in other galleries and museums around the UK and on the Mencap website. Deadline: 10 March. *Tel: 020 7696 6937, www.mencap.org.uk/snap*

**Advocacy for Independence** (AFI), a service from the Independent Living Association, based in West Sussex, is looking for volunteers. AFI helps disabled people and carers deal with official companies and individuals and have their rights met. *For more information, tel: 01903 219 482.*

## Sports

**The Llanelli Warriors Rugby Club** includes players with learning difficulties. *See www.llanelliwarriors.co.uk for more information.*


**www.disabilitynow.org.uk**

Have a look at our website for the latest news, features, campaign updates, sports and arts. There are also sections on motoring, travel and equipment. Get involved in our forums and Have Your Say sections. Check out the For Sale section for used wheelchairs, scooters and cars – many pictured – and our extensive online holiday directory, again with pictures. You can also find a penpal, register for our monthly email newsletter and enter exclusive online competitions.

**See www.disabilitynow.org.uk**


## Publications

**The Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities** has a booklet titled *First Impressions: Emotional and Practical Support for Families*, written in Urdu, for parents bringing up children with learning difficulties. *Meeting the Emotional Needs of Young People with Learning Disabilities from Minority Ethnic Communities* is an audio CD available in Urdu, Punjabi and Sylheti, for parents with teenagers with learning difficulties. Free. *Tel: 020 7803 1100, www.learningdisabilities.org.uk*

**The Carer's Handbook** by Jane Matthews offers advice for carers, including those giving up work to care for a disabled child. *How To, £10.99.*

**Epilepsy Action** has produced a *Mothers in Mind* booklet offering advice on family planning and baby care for women with epilepsy of childbearing age. *Tel: (freephone) 0808 800 5050, www.epilepsy.org.uk*

**The Sedbergh and District Community Trust** and the **Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority** (YDNPA) have a leaflet titled *Access for All*, giving information on accessible walks and facilities in the area. Free. Available at National Park Centres. *Tel: 0870 1 666 333, www.yorkshiredales.org.uk*

*Walking on Wheels: 50 Wheel-friendly Trails in Scotland*, by Eva McCracken, is a map book for wheelchair and electric scooter users covering the Scottish countryside. *Cualann Press, £10.99. Tel: 01383 733 724, www.cualann.com*

**The Parkinson's Disease Society** (PDS) has launched an employment guide for people with Parkinson's. PDS is also holding a number of employment information days around the UK during 2006. Tel: 01473 212 115, www.parkinsons.org.uk

**Four Seasons Health Care** has produced a leaflet on MRSA. Other leaflets are available including information on Alzheimer's Disease and multiple sclerosis. *Free from any Four Seasons care home or downloadable from the website at www.fshc.co.uk*

**Contact a Family's** *2006 Directory of Specific Conditions and Rare Disorders* is available online, on CD ROM and in print. From £25. *Tel: 020 7608 8700, www.cafamily.org.uk/dirworks.html*

**The National Deaf Children's Society** (NDCS) has launched a new leaflet titled *Meningitis and Child Deafness*. Free. *Download or order online at www.ndcs.org.uk, or tel/textphone (freephone): 0808 800 8880.*

## Courses

**HearFirst**, based in Lancashire, is holding a one-day workshop, an introduction to deaf awareness and communication tactics, on 7 March, and a one-day introduction to British Sign Language on 8 March. From £95 each. *Tel: 01706 872 816, textphone: 01706 872 908, www.hearfirst.org.uk*

**The Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities**, in partnership with the **Association for Real Change** (ARC) and **Lancaster University**, will be holding a series of workshops across the UK in March and April, including Bristol on 22 March and Manchester on 29 March. The workshops will be aimed at meeting the needs of people with learning difficulties from minority ethnic communities. £90, free to people with learning difficulties and their supporters. *Tel: 01246 555 043, www.learningdisabilities.org.uk, www.arcuk.org.uk*

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### • Personal

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**A LADY, 53,** with cp, uses wheelchair, would like to meet a caring gentleman aged 50-60 years old. My hobbies are watching tv or listening to cds, visiting places of interest , swimming. I have a dog and you must be abled to drive a car. I will reply to letters. Box No: 321

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**PEUGEOT 807 2.0** Hdi, registered November 03, 10.5k miles, e/mirrors and e/windows, air con, electronic rear passenger side doors, pas, CD player. With Constables wheelchair conversion incl rear ramp with electric winch, carries 5 including wheelchair. Still under manufacturer's warranty, cost £28,000 new, asking £18,000 ono. Tel: 02920 629400 (Cardiff) or 07720 450315.

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**FORD ESCORT 1.8** with Constables electric carchair and lift system for front passenger, carries 4 with wheelchair. R reg (1997), MOT expires Oct 2006, 15k miles and only one owner from new. £2,900 ono. Tel: 01206 575680 (Colchester).

**CHAIRMAN RENAULT KANGOO** 1.4RN, 01 reg, 29k miles, pas, c/locking, immobiliser. Gowrings conversion incl rear fold down ramp, easy access to low level floor, four fixings for stabilising wheelchair plus inertia belt. 2 fixed passenger seats, thus carries total of 5 including wheelchair. MOT expires May 06, tax expires July 06, fsh, only 2 owners from new, asking £6,995 ono. Tel: 01494 816160 (Penn, Bucks) or mobile: 07745 069116.

**TOYOTA HIACE POWER** bus 2.5, diesel, Y reg, 35.5k miles, RICON tail lift, e/windows and e/mirrors, air con, pas. Carries 5 incl wheelchair, 3 point seatbelt for wheelchair user. In vgc, only one owner from new, fsh, 6 months MOT, £7,000 ono. Tel: 01226 204784 (Barnsley).

**MERCEDES SPRINTER 214SWB** 2.3, auto, first registered September 99 (V reg), full MOT. Full wheelchair conversion by Jubilee Automotive Group with rear ramp enabling wheelchair user direct access to driving controls. Fsh, only 2 owners from new, 26k miles. Cost £40,000 new, asking £15,500 ono. Tel: 0121 355 6911 (Sutton Coldfield) or mobile: 07788 922270.

**CHAIRMAN CHRYSLER VOYAGER** 3.3, S reg (1998), 25k miles, auto, power cruise control, all electric, CD player with 10 stack option. Gowrings conversion incl rear manual ramp with push button hydraulic lowering floor. Carries 5 with wheelchair or 8 without, reinforced floor with anchors and belts. 2 owners from new, fsh, full MOT, cost £42,000 with full conversion, asking £12,000 ono. Tel: 0151 421 0303 (Woolton, Liverpool).

**CHAIRMAN CHRYSLER VOYAGER** 3.3 LX automatic, bright silver metallic with taupe interior. 2002, reg '52. 26k miles. Full rear wheel chair access – professional conversion. Automatic gearbox, cruise control, alloy wheels, air con, privacy glass, alarm, CD/radio/cassette, power steering, ABS, MOT October 2006,tax end of March 06. Full service history. Professional conversion carried out by Gowrings mobility, Newbury. Lowering floor system and short ramp entry. Chair user and 4 passengers inc. driver. Easy Out Roller Seat (rear) can be used when not carrying wheelchair. Excellent condition. £15,995 ono. Tel Debbie Leach: 01869 246687 (Bicester, Oxon). kevin.leach5@btinternet.com

**VW TRANSPORTER 1.9** Y Reg, manual, diesel, 51k miles. Can carry up to 2 wheelchair users with tie down fixtures, 3 passenger seats. Rear folding ramp. 1 owner from new. Fsh. £4500 ono. Tel: 0115 9255 163 (Notts). Email: info@dean-thomas.org.uk

**MILFORD PERSON LIFT**, under a year old, dismantled from car and is in own bag for easy transportation. Still under warranty, with full instruction manual and video. In immaculate condition, £1,500 ono. Tel (after 1): 0114 239 6818 (Sheffield).

**PEUGEOT EXPERT 1.9** diesel, R Reg, 32k miles. Fsh, pas, MOT 'til Nov 06, Mobility Solutions Conversion, capacity: 5 + wheelchair. Lowered floor with kneeling air suspension (just serviced and replaced) and short ramp. 4-point wheelchair fixings with locking inertia belts and full wheelchair seat belt. High view front and large opening side windows giving wheelchair user great visibility. Slide opening side doors. Rear seats swivel through 360 degrees giving great passenger flexibility. £7,195 ono. Tel: 01795 470588 (Sittingbourne, Kent) or mobile: 07973 393464

**CHAIRMAN CITROEN BERLINGO**, white, 1998 diesel, manual gearbox. With Gowring Mobility wheelchair conversion incl lowering suspension and ramp plus two extra seats with seat belts in rear. 27,448 miles with full service history and recent major service. Immaculate inside and out having been fully valeted also taxed. Original purchase price £16,500 with two previous owners. Priced at £5,500 for quick sale. Tel: 020 8668 5691 (Purley, Surrey).

**CHAIRMAN RENAULT KANGOO** 1.9, diesel, 28k miles, 51 reg. Gowrings conversion, seats 5 incl wheelchair, very economical. Cheapest there is @ £6,200, t+t: 07921 290 544 or email at brightorangemini@hotmail.com

### • Wheelchairs/scooters

**INVACARE STORM 3**, new March 2005 (8 months old). Perfect condition, hardly used. Fully equipped with mudguards, lighting, foot rests, battery charger, touchpad controls with proportional joystick etc. Was £5,200 Asking for best offer over £2,500. Tel Diana days: 01262 670642 (Bridlington, E. Yorks).

Cont'd pg 49

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**RENAULT KANGOO 1.2 LTR 16V PETROL** Date first registered: 12/06/03, Blue, 3 seats, 1 owner, as new, 5 speed manual, 19,000 miles. **£8,750**

**RENAULT TRAFIC SWB 1.9 DCI TURBO DIESEL** 2002, Red, Very good Condition, 6 speed manual, 21,000 miles, Air Bag, Central Locking, Full Width Lightweight Ramp, Power Steering, Side load door, Single front passenger seat, Two rear saloon passenger seats. **£11,450**

**RENAULT MASTER SWB 2.2 LTR DIESEL** Date first registered: 15/08/2001, Blue, 5 seats, Manual, 18,000 miles, Air Bag, Could take 2 wheelchairs, Full Width Lightweight Ramp, Power Steering, Remote Central Locking, Side load door, Twin front passenger seat. **£9,700**

**VOLKSWAGEN TRANSPORTER SWB 2.5 TDI TURBO DIESEL** Date first registered: 06/08/2001, Red, 5 seats, 24,000 miles, Automatic Transmission, Full width lightweight ramp, Hand controls, Electric park brake, Swivel base drivers seats, Power Steering, Radio/cassette player, Side load door, Two rear saloon passenger seats. **£10,500**

**VOLKSWAGEN TRANSPORTER SWB 2.5 TDI TURBO DIESEL** Date first registered: 25/11/1998, Green, 4 seats, 42,000 miles, Automatic Transmission, Could take 2 wheelchairs, Electric Winch, Lowering rear air suspension, Power Steering, Rear Saloon Heater, Side load door, Single front passenger seat, Two rear saloon passenger seats. **£6,800**

**VOLKSWAGEN TRANSPORTER T4 1.9 LTR TURBO DIESEL** Date first registered: 27/03/2000, Blue, 4 seats, Manual, 27,000 miles, RICON CLEARWAY electric wheelchair lift, Short wheelbase, Single front passenger seat, Could take 2 wheelchairs, Power Steering. **£8,995**

**FIAT SCUDO COMBI 2.0 LTR JTD TURBO DIESEL** Date first registered: 06/03/2003, Blue, 3 seats, Manual, 8,600 miles, 5 door, Air conditioning, Electric Mirrors, Electric reels, Electric windows, Lowered rear floor for wheelchair access, Power Steering, Radio/cassette player, Remote Central Locking, Single front passenger seat. **£11,750**

**RENAULT KANGOO 1.5 LTR DIESEL** Date first registered: 05/03/2003, Red, 3 seat, Manual, 17,000 miles, 5 door, Air Bag, Electric reels, Lowered rear floor for wheelchair access, Power Steering, Radio/cassette player, Remote Central Locking. **£8,995**

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| 2005 05 | **Renault Master** SWB SL28 dCi100, Red, Wheelchair position plus 3 passenger seats & fixed ramp. | £17,995 |
| 2004 54 | **Fiat Doblo** 1.3JTD Active, Blue, Wheelchair position plus 2 passengers & fixed ramp. Winch. | £11,495 |
| 2004 04 | **Chrysler Grand Voyager** CRD 2.5D, Blue, Lowered floor wheelchair position, 4 passenger seats | £21,995 |
| 2004 04 | **Renault Kangoo Authentique** 1.6 Auto, Green, Powered rear doors and access ramp, operated by remote control. Automatic wheelchair securing system. 6 Way drivers seat for transfer from wheelchair to driving position. Hand controls & driving adaptations to suit driver. Price excluding hand controls | £16,995 |
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| 2001 Y | **VW Transporter** SWB 1.9TD, Red, Wheelchair position and fixed ramp, 4 passenger seats. | £7,995 |
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| 1996 P | **Fiat Fiorino** 1.4P, Red, Lowered floor wheelchair position with fixed ramp, 3 passengers seats. | £2,995 |
| 1996 N | **VW Caravelle** SWB 2.4D Red, Lowered floor access with lowering suspension. Wheelchair position, 6 passenger seats | £5,995 |

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**Volkswagen T5** Diesel 1.9, Mileage: 34,816. Registered: Mar 04, Colour: Silver, Access: Lift, Seats: 4 – PAS, CL. **£14,250**

**Citroen Berlingo MK11** Diesel 1.9, Mileage: TBA, Registered: Feb 05, Colour: Med Blue, Access: Ramp, Seats: 3 – Long Floor, EW, Driver Airbag, CL. **£11,950**

**Renault Traffic DCi** 100 Diesel 1.9, Mileage: 16,642. Registered: Oct 04, Colour: Met Silver, Access: Rear Lift, Seats: 4 - Glazed Tailgate, Single Pass Seat. **£14,250**

**Toyota Hiace GL** 2.5 Diesel, Mileage: 10,253. Registered: Jan 05, Colour: Met Silver, Access: Rear Lift, Seats: 4 – PAS, Drivers Airbag, Window Van. **£15,250**

**Peugeot Partner** Petrol 1.4, Mileage: 5,797. Registered: Feb 05, Colour: Silver, Access Rear Ramp, Seats: Flexi-Seat, Short floor, Manual. **£11,450**

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*DN Extra*
March 2006
published 11 March.
Classified deadlines:
Booking and copy:
1 March.

*Disability Now*
April 2006 published
25 March.
Classified deadlines:
Booking: 10 March.
Copy: 14 March.

• Recruitment (on page 46 to 50)

LondonTravelWatch

## Transport users need a voice!

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*London TravelWatch is the official voice of transport users in and around London. We have a wide remit representing users of London's buses, Underground, mainline railways, Eurostar, DLR, Croydon Tramlink, taxis, Dial-a-Ride, river services and London's main road network (including cyclists and pedestrians).*

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For a full job description and application form, please visit our website at www.londontravelwatch.org.uk, or contact Jane Sugarman on 020 7726 9983, or email jane.sugarman@londontravelwatch.org.uk or write to London TravelWatch, 6 Middle Street, London EC1A 7JA, quoting job reference CO/JS/DN/0206.

**Closing date: Monday, 13th March 2006.** Interviews to be held: Thursday, 23rd March 2006. (CVs submitted without an accompanying application form will not be accepted.)

London TravelWatch is the operating name of the London Transport Users Committee

**We welcome applications from all sections of our diverse community**

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• Wheelchair Event

Care Services Improvement Partnership CSIP

Health and Social Care
Change Agent Team

## Wheelchair Events and Survey.

The Care Services Improvement Partnership are conducting a review of wheelchair services in England on behalf of the Department of Health. As part of the review they are holding a series of regional listening and learning events and hosting an online and telephone survey.

## Where will these events be held?

Bristol, 20 February, Manchester, 22 February, Gateshead, 28 February Cambridge, 03 March, Birmingham, 07 March, London, 10 March

For further information contact: Tracey Bond, tel: 0161 2372279, email tracey@icesdoh.org or download the application form from www.cat.csip.org.uk/wheelchairevents

## National Wheelchair Survey for England

If you are unable to attend an event you can still share your views and experiences via a telephone and web based survey that will begin on 20th February 2006.

Tel 0800 106011 or log onto www.cat.csip.org.uk/wheelchairsurvey

The information gathered will inform a final report to government on service provision and contribute to proposals for the future of Wheelchair services.

• Holidays (Cont'd pg 47)

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## • Holidays (Cont'd pg 48)

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**OR TEL/FAX 01570 470275**

**Norfolk, Nar Valley Holiday Cottages**
3 self-catering, all wheelchair accessible, 1 with wheel-in shower room, 2 with airbaths. Mostly en-suite. Electric bed. On working farm – peaceful location, central for beaches and tourist attractions. Indoor heated swimming pool.
**More details and prices, contact: Rosemary on 01760 338797.**

**Brittany Cottage** to let. Adapted for wheelchair use. Good access to beaches. Sleeps up to 6. Details **C. Hodgson. Tel (01924) 499220. www.brimartravel.co.uk**

**PAIGNTON, DEVON**
Six Berth wheelchair accessible caravan within a mile of the beach. Site facilities include club, indoor and outdoor pools, sauna, steam room, free wheelchair loan, children's play area.
Tel. Devon ASBAH on 01803 522256 – www.dasbah.co.uk

Spacious, very comfortable, fully equipped bungalow in beautiful, historic Welsh border village, sleeps 5+. Wheelchair accessible. Specially adapted grounds with spectacular views. Tel:**01981 240859**. e-mail: **LTM3castles@aol.com**

**Disabled & Carers English Coastal Holidays**
Spaciously built for quadriplegic owner. Ceiling hoists Elec hi/lo beds Shower/toileting chairs etc. 2 flats sleep 6 and 4 All mod cons stunning sea/mountain views Heysham, Morecambe Bay. Caravan on sheltered site, balcony, pool complex, Fishing boating lake. Filey Yorkshire Sleeps 4-6 Call Allan or Jan 01274 588142 for brochures

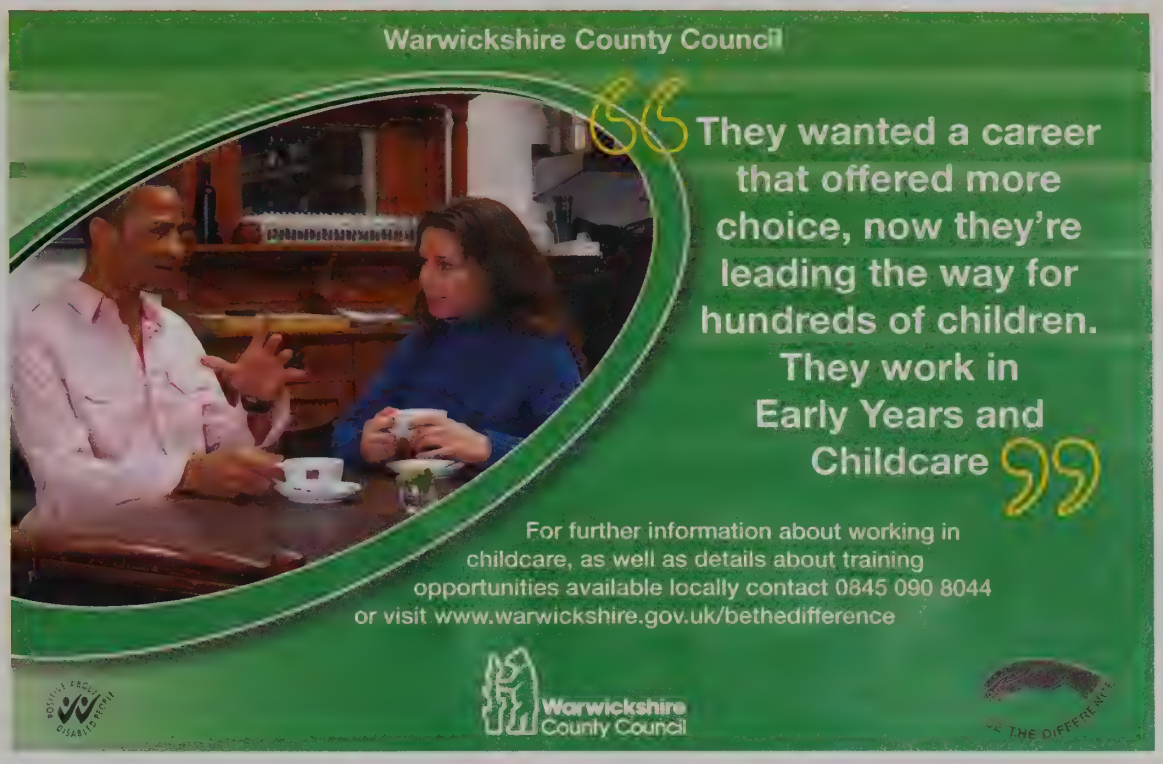
**Near Salisbury** – newly converted stable block self-catering units. Ground floor 1 double/twin bedroom en-suite wheel-in shower. Upstairs 1 double, 1 single, shower room. Open plan kitchen & living room. Patio & shared garden. ETB category 2, 4-star highly commended. Non-smoking. Prices from £195 pw. Available all year. Tel: 01722 349002, e-mail: mail@old-stables.co.uk, www.old-stables.co.uk

**Central Devon**: 3 comfortable ground floor manor farmhouse apartments, M2 wheelchair accessible. Picturesque, peaceful situation, on-site coarse fishing. Half mile Crediton, 8 miles Exeter. No smoking/pets. Ideal holiday base. ☆☆☆☆ Graded. **Tel: 01363 772684, www.creedymanor.com**

**Adapted caravan on popular family site at Burnham on sea, Somerset. Double glazed & heated, sleeps 6. Site shop, Nightly entertainment & fishing lake. Ring Kate on 0117 9513193**

**10 MINUTES FROM DISNEYLAND**
Florida villa owned by paraplegic. Sleeps up to 12, fully accessible and large. King size bed with ensuite bathroom, wc and wheel-in shower. Large pool with water operated seat for a disabled person. A holiday you can take with confidence. Contact John Gillett on: 01805 601147.

## • Recruitment (on page 46 to 50)


Warwickshire County Council
They wanted a career that offered more choice, now they're leading the way for hundreds of children. They work in Early Years and Childcare
For further information about working in childcare, as well as details about training opportunities available locally contact 0845 090 8044 or visit www.warwickshire.gov.uk/bethedifference
Warwickshire County Council

**scope employment service**

Being disabled should create no barriers, so if you possess the skills and experience sought by numerous employers, we're keen to help you find the job that's right for you through our network of employment partners.

Working on behalf of a number of employers throughout the UK who see the skills you can offer as a genuine asset to their organisation, we have the following exciting career opportunities for disabled people keen to live an independent life and reach their potential:

**Call Centre Opportunities**

**Immediate! Training Sector** – Salford Quays, Manchester (Feb & March) Junior roles (£12,500) Senior roles (£14,500)
**Retail Industry** – Leicester (c £12,000+)
**Health Insurance** – Tunbridge Wells c. £14,500 Salford Quays, Manchester
**Financial** – Brighton, Southend, Leeds, Sheffield, Leicester, Hemel Hempstead, Southampton, Swansea, Newport – c. £14,000

**Skills Required**

Strong customer focus, good communication (both written and verbal), computer literacy, administration, problem solving, decision making

**Other Opportunities Available**

**Hotel based opportunities** in Manchester, Birmingham and Brighton
**Pharmacist vacancies** – nationwide – Salaries from £25-£42k
**Variety of roles in Retail DIY environment** in London, Yeovil, Basingstoke, Salisbury, Wednesbury, Luton
**Administration Roles for Central Government office** – London

Our partners have opportunities at various levels and can also offer both full and part time permanent employment with competitive packages.

If you are interested in these positions and would like to be considered, regardless of your disability (or would like to see if we can help you find employment in any other area or sector), please send your C.V. and a covering letter including details of the role and location which interests you, your salary expectations, plus details of your disability and how you have overcome any challenges in the workplace. Also, please indicate clearly whether you are currently in work/full time education/unemployed and seeking work or in danger of losing your current job due to your disability.

**Please email to: employment.support@scope.org.uk or post to: Scope's Employment Service, Suite 1a, King's Hall, St Ives Business Park, Parsons Green, St Ives PE27 4WY or tel: 01480 309615, quoting ref: DN/0306.**

Scope's Employment Service is involved in assisting disabled people into and remaining in work. To find out more about the services we provide, visit our website: www.scope.org.uk/work

**For disabled people achieving equality**

## • Services

enable Select **NEWSFLASH**

Enable Enterprises' Select now sells disposable and reusable swimming pants for children, teens and adults who require additional protection under swimwear or wetsuits in a pool or while doing watersports.

Come and visit our online shop.
**www.enableenterprises.com/select**
**0800 358 8484**

**BIRKDALE PAEDIATRIC & ADULT NEURO CLINIC**
Advice and treatment from newborn babies to adults.
A wide range of conditions treated, some of these include movement, posture, balance, walking, coordination, hand-function and learning difficulties.
Specialise in cerebral palsy and neurological conditions.
Farshideh Bondarenko DIP PHYSIO MCSP SRP.
**web: www.neuro-physio.co.uk tel: 0208 998 9403**

**PERSONAL ADS**
For personal ads, submit about 25 words and send a cheque or postal order for £10 payable to *Disability Now* with your ad. This is to help cover our costs.

• Recruitment (on page 46 to 50)

**The University of Kent frequently recruits for clerical assistants, technicians and IT assistants, administrative staff, research and lecturing staff across our faculties.**

*Staff who have a disability are currently under-represented and we wish to improve the diversity of our workforce*
*The University is a member of the double tick pledge and will interview all applicants who meet the essential criteria.*

For information about our vacancies please check our recruitment website

**http://www.kent.ac.uk/registry/personnel/vacancies.htm.**

For details in different formats, please apply to The Personnel Department. Textphone users please phone **01227 824145.**

We actively promote equal opportunity in education and employment and welcome applicants from all sections of the community.

KENT
UNIVERSITY OF KENT

• Holidays (Cont'd pg 50)

## Las Piedras Holidays

**Inspirational holidays in beautiful area of southern rural Spain.**

Accessible transport, exciting excursions, swimming pool with hoist. Flexible holidays to suit your needs – full board, B&B or self-catering in superb fully wheelchair accessible guesthouse. Contact us now for info/brochure, call or fax 00 34 952 033 100 or email us.

info@laspiedras.co.uk
www.laspiedras.co.uk

## MOONPENNY COTTAGE

North York Moors National Park

Fully wheelchair accessible self-catering holiday cottage. Sleeps 4. Designed specifically for the wheelchair user. Single story, Grade 2 listed converted farm building, south facing, overlooking beautiful valleys and hills beyond. Large sitting/dining room with open fire, kitchen, wheel-in shower room with shower seat, handrails to shower and toilet area. All work surfaces, basins and appliances at wheelchair level. One double, one twin bedroom. Full details/ brochure from Mrs Amicia Bentley

TEL: 01751 460311
www.mici.supanet.com

**BOOK NOW FOR SUMMER**

• Accommodation

Thinking of moving?
Call our gold award winning estate agency service on
**08456 120 280**
**or visit our website**

MFH Mobility Friendly Homes
mobilityfriendlyhomes.co.uk

- Searching for accessible or adapted property?
- Accessible or adapted property to sell or let?
- Looking for an approved estate agent?

The Accessible Property Register
web: www.accessible-property.org.uk
Tel: 0114 2307058

## Support for disabled people

If you have a disability or health condition that affects your chances of finding or keeping a job, ask to see a Disability Employment Adviser. Disability Employment Advisers are based in Jobcentre Plus offices and Jobcentres and offer a wide range of advice and support. They can help you find a job, or stay in work if you are already employed.

The specialist service that Disability Employment Advisers provide, includes:

- advice on finding and keeping a job
- support with benefit entitlement and programmes like New Deal, and
- advice to employers on employing disabled people.

**Find out what additional help you can get by visiting our website.**

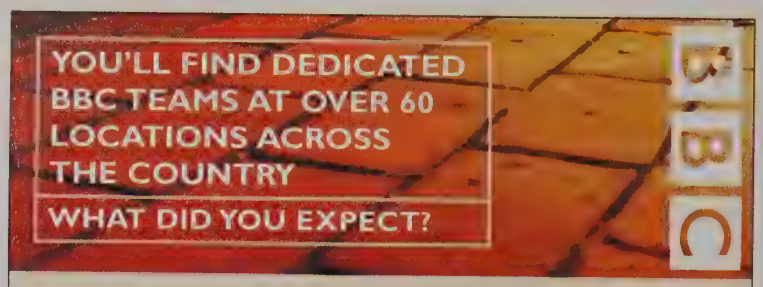
**www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk**

Jobseeker Direct: 0845 6060 234
Textphone: 0845 6055 255

POSITIVE ABOUT DISABLED PEOPLE

Jobcentreplus

Including Jobcentres and social security offices




### BBC Extend Scheme

**Ref. 80695**

Exclusively for disabled people, Extend is an award-winning, BBC-wide work placement scheme which offers appropriately experienced and/or qualified disabled people a great opportunity to gain six months paid work experience within the BBC. Although the scheme doesn't necessarily lead to a full-time job, last year more than half its intake gained further work at the BBC.

Starting from April/May 2006, around 15 placements will be available right across the UK including London, Norwich, Birmingham, Manchester, Newcastle and Glasgow, in both programming areas and programme support areas.

As well as matching the criteria for the individual placement, you'll need to demonstrate a keen interest in broadcasting and knowledge of BBC output. Excellent communication and team working skills are also essential.

For further details and an application form, please contact BBC Recruitment, quoting the reference number and your name and address. Tel: 0870 333 1330. Textphone: 020 8008 4300. Fax: 020 8008 4001. Address: PO Box 48305, London W12 6YE. Email: recruitment@bbc.co.uk Website: **bbc.co.uk/jobs/extend** Ceefax page 696.

Completed forms to be returned by 23 March (strict deadline).

# Disability alliance

## Chief Executive

**£39,738 (PO6-7), plus 5% pension, London**

We believe it is unacceptable that thousands of disabled people in the UK live in poverty. We are committed to breaking the link between poverty and disability and ensuring that disabled people achieve independence and control over their lives.

We do this through high profile national policy and campaign work and by providing advice and information on social security benefits. Our best selling publication, the Disability Rights Handbook is highly valued, as are our other guides to benefits. Our Tribunal Support Unit provides second-tier assistance to advice agencies across London.

You will be an experienced and effective manager able to lead and develop a small but influential national organisation. You will work closely with the Board of Trustees. Your strong leadership will be complemented by your ability to motivate and develop others and to work in partnership with external organisations. Your background will include income generation and financial management and you will have strong written and verbal communication skills.

Application packs from: Disability Alliance, 88-94 Wentworth Street, London E1 7SA. Tel: 020 7247 8776 (10 - 4) or 020 7247 8759 (at other times), fax 020 7247 8765 or email office.da@dial.pipex.com If you would like an informal discussion please contact Lorna Reith. Disabled candidates positively welcomed.

**Closing date: noon Friday 17 March**

Charity number 1063115

**2 PUMA KINETIC** Powerchairs, new March 2003, fully equipped with footrests, keys, bags etc; also includes charger, and is in like-new condition. Was £4,800 pounds new, asking for best offer over £2,000. Tel Diana days: 01262 670642 (Bridlington, E. Yorks).

**INVACARE SPECTRA PLUS** electric wheelchair with charger, max speed 4 mph, tilt-in-space, cushion seat. 14 months' old, local delivery can be arranged, £2,000 ono. Tel: 0121 522 2466.

**9 CYCLONE BASKETBALL** wheelchairs, several seat sizes. £5,250 for all, £595 each. For details, tel: 01206 545341 (Colchester).

**VENTURE TRANSIT WHEELCHAIR** with solid tyres and safety belt, large zipped bag fits over handles for holding shopping. In mint condition, asking £140. Tel: 01932 563440 (Shepperton, Middlesex).

**JAZZY 1121 ELECTRIC** wheelchair, 3 years' old, blue. In good condition, £1,000 ono. Tel: 0777 9691510 (Maidstone).

**ROAD KNIGHT MINI-4** 4 wheel scooter with kerb climber, max speed 8 mph, approx range 15 miles on full charge. With basket, metallic silver, horn. In good condition, cost £1,600 new, asking £480 ono. Tel day: 01206 792152 (Colchester, Essex) or night: 01206 823623.

**PRIDE LX POWERCHAIR** with kerb climber and charger. Range up to 40 km on full charge, max speed 6 kmh. Metallic blue, joystick control, drop handle bars/easily dismantled for transportation or storage. In immaculate condition, only used once, £790 ono. Tel: 020 8681 8469 (South London) email: davidgcroy@yahoo.co.uk

**INVACARE SPECTRA PLUS** electric wheelchair max speed 4 mph, metallic blue. Will deliver in UK and fit brand new batteries on arrival. Absolute bargain, £950. Tel: 01204 418778 (Bolton) or mobile: 07908 242320.

## • Household & Families

**OXFORD MINI-HOIST**, manual, hardly used. £395 ono. Tel: 07831 417037 (W.Midlands).

**BATHMATE, USED THREE** times, cost £995 in July 05. £600 ono . Sale as not suitable for my disability. Tel (after 1630): 01353 861610.

**WINSFORD ELECTRONIC FEEDER** for independent use. With rechargeable battery, in Samsonite travelling case, with all accessories incl, cup holder, splash pan. A year old, £800 or any reasonable offers considered. Tel: 07855 526437 (Rotherham).

**ELECTRIC SINGLE CARER** bed (approx 6 ft 10 x 3 ft 5) with mattress. Made by Huntleigh Healthcare. Each end raises independently as does the overall height of the bed all with a brand new handset. Excellent condition. Available for only £300.00 but buyer must collect with own transport (please note bed very heavy!). Tel: 07734 770133 (Bury)

**ARJO PRIMO HIGH**/low tub with hydro massage. With disinfection system, shower attachment, automatic filling system and temperature control. 9 months' old, hardly used, cost £10,000, asking £5,000. Tel: 01274 585706 (West Yorks).

## • Motorhome

**FORD AUTOMATIC MOTORHOME**, 1992 (J reg) with hand controls. Remote control side lift (Interbility). Double and single bed, cooker and many extras included. A year's MOT and six months' tax. In vgc througout, £6,500. Tel: 01493 393368 (Norfolk).

• Recruitment (on page 46 to 50)

# Stop us all seeing red.

**Watch, analyse and help improve London's roads**
**Enforcement Officers • £18,500 to £21,500 • Westminster**

It only takes one person to park where they shouldn't for chaos to follow. It's the kind of attitude that's frustrated road users for years, but now you can do something about it. By monitoring the capital through our CCTV cameras, you'll identify and penalise offending drivers – and personally help to improve people's driving experience.

From our open plan offices in Westminster, you'll be able to access a comprehensive camera network spanning London. Your role will be to keep a close eye on the red routes, bus lanes and box junctions, identifying contraventions and determining whether they merit further action.

We are recruiting for both experienced and trainee roles, so previous experience isn't essential. However, regardless of your background, you will need good levels of concentration, attention to detail, accuracy and the ability to check information against set rules and procedures.

Depending on your experience levels, you'll receive six to nine months' on-the-job training and we'll help you to achieve a BTEC qualification in CCTV.

With lots of autonomy in a friendly team environment, there's much to look forward to here; not least the fact that you'll be spending your days making your – and everyone's – journey home easier.

To apply, visit www.tfl.gov.uk/jobs or call 08707 200869 quoting reference TfL 1683.

**We want to be as diverse as the city we represent and welcome applications from everyone regardless of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, faith or disability.**

MAYOR OF LONDON

Transport for London


## • Property for sale

**HEMEL HEMPSTEAD 2x1** bedroom ground floor flats. Low level disabled access front and back. Access to garden. Reserved parking in front. Off plan: can fit specific kitchen etc. From £120,000. Contact Relton 07713 246163. email: relton_jph@yahoo.com

**TO LET – DENTON**, Manchester. Fully wheelchair accessible modern detached bungalow in quiet cul-de-sac. Two bedrooms. Adapted bathroom with level access shower and safety floor covering. Offered unfurnished but includes carpets, curtains, fridge/freezer and new electric cooker. Garden with greenhouse. Ample parking. Rent - £675 PCM. Tel: 0161 366 5775 www.accessible-property.org.uk

See more update linage everyday: www.disabilitynow.org.uk


**SEND US YOUR SMALLS...**

...and make a big impression. Small ads in DN reach over 60,000 people for just £9 a line. All small ads must be paid for in advance. If you want to advertise, please use the form provided. Send it with a cheque for the total to Disability Now, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW.

**Make your next role as important as ours.**

DFID, the Department for International Development: leading the British government's fight against world poverty.

We offer opportunities in our headquarters in London and East Kilbride – but also in many developing countries, with staff based in DFID offices plus British Embassies and High Commissions around the world. We have roles for leaders; professionals; specialists; managers; graduates and administrators.

DFID is an equal opportunities employer. Applications are welcomed from all parts of the community and we actively encourage interest from women, ethnic minority groups and those with a disability. Selection is on merit. Candidates should be UK Nationals, nationals of a member state of the European Economic Area (EEA) or Commonwealth citizens with the right to work in the UK.

**You can find out more about us, and our work, on our website www.dfid.gov.uk. You'll also find information about specific vacancies, opportunities, and an electronic application on the site.**

DFID Department for International Development
www.dfid.gov.uk

## • Courses

**UCanDoIT Equal** Peabody Trust

**U CAN DO I.T!**

**FREE COMPUTER TRAINING IN YOUR OWN HOME**

The Thresholds Partnership programme is offering the opportunity of free training to unemployed blind, deaf and physically disabled people living in Tower Hamlets and Hackney. The basic introductory accredited course consists of 10 training sessions and includes email, surfing the web and an introduction to newsgroups and chatrooms.

For more information or to register your interest contact Mathew Corbett or Susie MacCrimmon on **020 7739 6668**

**Centre for Disability Studies School of Sociology and Social Policy University of Leeds**

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

## New Diplomas and MAs in Disability Studies

In addition to our established Diploma/MA in Disability Studies programmes, the Centre of Disability Studies now offers five new taught post graduate courses in Disability and related fields. These include Disability and Gender, Disability and Health, Disability and Race and Ethnicity, Disability and Social Policy, and Disability and Special Educational Needs. These dedicated schemes give students the opportunity to apply a disability studies perspective to particular areas of social policy and support. All our Disability Studies courses are designed for people working in or planning a career in the general area of disability research and related services.

Candidates will normally have a first degree or equivalent professional qualification, **but relevant experience will be taken into account where appropriate**. This course is taught in an accessible location and the University welcomes disabled students.

**Note:** only the Post Graduate Diploma/MA in Disability Studies scheme is available as an open distance learning package.

For further details please contact **MARIE ROSS** or **DEBBIE WESTMORELAND** in the School of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Leeds, LST 9JT.

**Tel: and Minicom 0113 343 4408 or 0113 343 4407**

## • Holidays

Two adapted caravans for disabled holidaymakers. Each sleeps six (two wheelchair accessible bedrooms), wheel-in shower with seat, open-plan lounge/kitchen area, ramp access. Site close to beach. £130-£350 per week.

**Prestatyn, North Wales**

For further information contact Leeds & Bradford ASBAH, c/o Jo Baxter, 8 Staveley Court, Shipley, BD18 4HF, tel: 01274 591850, email: jo.baxter2@btinternet.com

HOLIDAY ACCOMMODATION TO LET

## Royal Deeside Scotland

4 superb self-catering cottages located on the banks of the River Dee Designed and equipped to the highest standard with excellent facilities for disabled people, their families and friends. Please contact Crathie Opportunity Holidays.

Tel: 013397 42100 for more details or

e-mail: info@crathieholidays.org.uk

web: www.crathieholidays.org.uk

**Category I Independent Wheelchair Travel**

## • Recruitment (on page 46 to 50)

**Surrey Independent Living Council**

Surrey Independent Living Council (SILC) provides an information, advice and support service to disabled people on Direct Payments and independent living. Following a review of its structure, it wishes to appoint to two posts to assist the organisation with achieving its strategic aims to develop it into a Centre for Independent Living and to provide an effective and efficient Direct Payments service to users. The organisation operates a flexi-time policy.

### DIRECTOR (DR1)

**Salary range: £31,254 - £35,253 incl. outer fringe allowance**
**35 hours per week**

We are looking for a dynamic individual with vision, leadership skills and creativity who can lead the strategic development of the organisation and ensure a quality service is delivered to users. The successful applicant will have a good understanding of the voluntary/charitable sector, the legislative framework in which Direct Payments are awarded, the issues facing disabled people and have a commitment to the philosophy of Independent Living, as well as excellent people management skills.

### TEAM LEADER (TL2)

**Salary range: £26,664 - £30,465 incl. outer fringe allowance (pro rata)**
**28 hours per week**

We are looking for an individual with a demonstrable record in delivering a quality service to users, meeting contract requirements and of supervising staff in a charity, social care or health setting. The successful applicant will have a good understanding of the legislative framework in which Direct Payments are awarded, an understanding of the issues facing disabled people and have a commitment to the philosophy of Independent Living, as well as excellent people skills.

For an application pack for either of these posts, please e-mail SILC at **admin@surreyilc.org.uk** or telephone: **01483 458111**, Minicom: 01483 459977, or download from our website: **www.surreyilc.org.uk** quoting the reference number.

SILC is an Equal Opportunities employer

**Closing date for both posts: 17th March 2006. Interview date post DR1: Thursday, 30th March 2006**
**Interview date post TL2: Friday, 31st March 2006**

## Director of Learning & Skills

**Starting Salary: £21, 654 to £23, 265**

Bradford's award-winning theatre company working with learning disabled artists is looking for an experienced and qualified drama tutor to head up its Learning & Skills programme.

**Deadline: Fri 7 April - 5pm**
**Interviews: Thu 27 & Fri 28 April**

For an application pack (quote ref: 'DLS'): write to Mind the Gap, Queens House, Queens Road, Bradford BD8 7BS; email arts@mind-the-gap.org.uk; fax 01274 544501

Application packs can be made available in a variety of formats.

MIND THE GAP

Mind the Gap is a registered charity no: 328476

## Wheelchair accessible gite in South West France

Tranquil holiday destination in rural LOT region (famous for its gastronomy and its wine). Picturesque small town of Montcuq with fantastic Sunday market 2 miles. Swimming pool on site. Renovated with disabled people in mind (lift to all levels, wheel in showers and electric scooter available at no extra cost). Sleeps 8.

Email: **clementisabelle@yahoo.co.uk** or call **020 8674 8761**.

**CONDITIONS – Disability Now maintains the right to amend or withdraw linage adverts without prior notice. All adverts must comply with the British Code of Advertising Practice.**

**Telephone numbers and addresses will not be placed in personal adverts, for confidentiality. Instead, Box numbers will be provided. Likewise, telephone numbers and addresses will not be given out over the telephone if requested.**

**Box Numbers can be requested for non-personal adverts. However, it may limit the response to it. If you want to advertise documents, goods or services contact Patrick Durham-Matthews tel: 020 7619 7320, fax: 020 7619 7331.**

**Linage adverts can only be used by private individuals. All commercial enquiries must be addressed to Richard Gresham (see contact details above).**

**DN cannot accept responsibility for loss or damage of adverts or letters during forwarding. It is the responsibility of the advertiser to check the content of their advert, and to ensure any abbreviations cannot be misunderstood.**

## FLIPKLIP BOOK HOLDER

If you're a bookworm, make reading easier with a Flipklip book holder. BlueZap are giving away ten book holders, usually worth £6.97.

The Flipklip holds down the pages, leaving your hands free. Small, light, portable and practical, the book holder enables you to multitask so you can read while exercising or cooking – it is ideal for reference books like cookbooks and catalogues. It is adaptable and works on all shapes and sizes of book, both hardback and paperback, and can be taken wherever you need it, from the beach to the office. The Flipklip is made from ABS plastic with soft vinyl finger caps to provide a light grip and a stainless steel spring. It can be clamped on the outside of the book for storage.

For your chance to win a book holder, tick 'Flipklip' in the entry form.

For more information, tel: 01422 883 396, www.bookhelp.co.uk

## RAINBOW SOUND BLOCKS

The Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB) is giving away a Rainbow Sound Block toy, usually worth £19.99. The toy gives children the opportunity to explore and learn about shapes and recognise different sounds. The colourful blocks engage children in sorting, stacking, rolling and packing, providing a fun learning experience while developing their motor skills and stimulating their curiosity.

For your chance to win the toy, tick 'Toy' in the entry form.

Find out more about this and other toys and puzzles in RNIB's Games, Toys and Leisure catalogue. Contact RNIB Customer Services on 0845 758 5691, or visit the online shop at http://onlineshop.rnib.org.uk

## THERMOSKIN GLOVES

Thermoskin is offering five pairs of gloves to *DN* readers, worth £27.99 per pair. Thermoskin is a natural pain relief product for arthritis, RSI and sprains and strains. It is a drug-free, non-invasive, chemical-free, therapeutic heat support.

Thermoskin's clinically tested supports can be used for your knees, elbows, ankles, wrists, hands, back and many other areas to ease aches and pains. Thermoskin works by applying a combination of natural body heat and light compression to help alleviate pain and discomfort and improve mobility.

The supports are washable and have double over-lock stitching to ensure durability. Their unique Trioxon lining reduces perspiration and allows them to be worn almost continuously.

For your chance to win a pair, tick 'Gloves' in the entry form.

Thermoskin products are available from Lloyds pharmacy, Boots and independent pharmacies. The full range of Thermoskin products can be seen and purchased from the website www.thermoskin.co.uk or tel: 01455 639750 for more information.

THERMOSKIN® with TRIOXON®

## *DN next month*

*All the best news, views, jobs and offers. On sale 25 March*

**BLUNKETT'S BACK**

After stepping down as work and pensions secretary in November, David Blunkett talks to *DN* about his experiences as a leading figure in UK politics

## LAST MONTH'S WINNERS

The winners of the Alison Lapper book in the January issue were: B.Rains from Hants, Mr S.Ellis from Derbyshire, S.Brown from Preston, K.Sadil from Gwynedd, M.Pearson from N.Yorks, J.McGrath from Belfast, A.J.Buffin from Herts, S.Baker from Norfolk, A.Plumb from Bristol and V.Winter from Co.Durham.
The winners of the Blue Badge Protector were: V.Gibson from Herts, S.Lloyd from N.Wales, P.G.Randles from Oxon, C.Bell from Kent, A.Carter from Lancs, M.B.Martyn from Swindon, P.W.Corcoran from Lincs, B.Balgock from Lincs, R.Bellisario from Heston and B.Wilson from Glasgow.
The winners of the Able 2 Wear trousers were: B.Rankin from Redcar, G.Humphries from Stoke on Trent and P.Field from Kent. The winners of the Able 2 Wear poncho were S.Barber from Somerset and M.O'Brien from W.Midlands.

## to enter

Tick the competition circle below, add your details, and send for FREE to *Disability Now*, Freepost WD4323, London N7 9BR, or you can fax it on 020 7619 7331, or email the details to: fiona.mitchell@scope.org.uk

**Flipklip** ◯ **Toy** ◯ **Gloves** ◯

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**terms & conditions** Closing date for entrants: 17.03.06 • Entrants must be over 18 • No proof of purchase required • UK entrants only • No cash alternatives • Winners notified by post • Editor's decision is final • Special offers not open to *DN* staff or associates • Winners may be announced in *DN* • In association with BlueZap, RNIB and Thermoskin. We may use your name and address for further marketing purposes. Please tick the box if you do not wish your details to be included ❑


Jubilee mobility
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www.jubileeauto.co.uk
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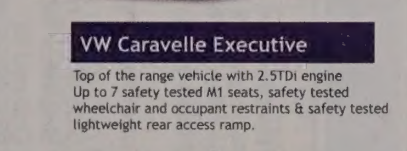

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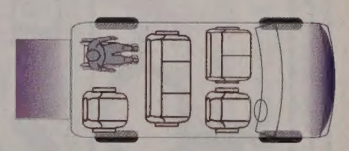

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Motability

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